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PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

W. C. Tuttle
W. Townend
Gordon MacCreagh
William Byron Mowery
Hugh Pendexter
Rolf Bennett
Eugene Cunningham
L. Paul
Bill Adams
F. St. Mars

1 Complete Novel
2 Complete Novelettes

Can You Guess This Man's Age?

See if You Can Tell Within 25 Years; The Author Couldn't; But He Stuck With Hobart Bradstreet Until He Revealed His Method of Staying Young

I USED to pride myself on guessing people's ages. That was before I met Hobart Bradstreet, whose age I missed by a quarter-century. But before I tell you how old he really is, let me say this:

My meeting with Bradstreet I count the luckiest day of my For while we often hear how our minds and ages are about 50% efficient—and at times feel it to be the truth—he knows *why*. Furthermore, he knows how to overcome it—in five minutes—and he showed me *how*.

This man offers no such bromides as setting-up exercises, deep-breathing, or any of those things you know at the outset you'll never do. He uses a principle that is the foundation of all chiropractic, napropathy, mechano-therapy, and even osteopathy. Only he does not touch a hand to you; it isn't necessary.

The reader will grant Bradstreet's method of staying young worth knowing and using, when told that its originator (whose photograph reproduced here was taken a month ago) is sixty-five years old!

And here is the secret: *he keeps his spine a half-inch longer than it ordinarily would measure.*

Any man or woman who thinks just one-half inch elongation of the spinal column doesn't make a difference should try it! It is easy enough. I'll tell you how. First, though, you may be curious to learn why a full-length spine puts one in an entirely new class physically. The spinal column is a series of tiny bones, between which are pads or cushions of cartilage. Nothing in the ordinary activities of us humans stretches the spine. So it "settles" day by day; until those once soft and resilient pads become thin as a safety-razor blade—and just about as hard. One's spine (the most wonderfully designed shock-absorber known) is then an unyielding column that transmits every shock straight to the base of the brain.

Do you wonder folks have backaches and headaches? That one's nerves pound toward the end of a hard day? Or that a nervous system may periodically go to pieces? For every nerve in one's body connects with the spine, which is a sort of central switchboard. When the "insulation," or cartilage, wears down and flattens out, the nerves are exposed, or even impinged—and there is trouble on the line.

Now, for proof that sublaxation of the spine causes most of the ills and ailments which spell "age" in men or women. Flex your spine—"shake it out"—and they will disappear. You'll feel the difference in *ten minutes*. At least, I did. It's no trick to secure complete spinal laxation as Bradstreet does it. But like everything else, one must know how. No amount of violent exercise will do it; not even chopping wood. As for walking, or golfing, your spine settles down a bit firmer with each step.

Mr. Bradstreet had evolved from his 25-year experience with spinal mechanics a simple, boiled-down formula of just five movements. Neither takes more than one minute, so it means but five minutes a day. But those movements! I never experienced such compound exhilaration before. I was a good subject for the test, for I went into it with a dull headache. At the end of the second movement I thought I could actually feel my blood circulating. The third movement in this remarkable SPINE-MOTION series brought an amazing feeling of exhilaration. One motion seemed to open and shut my backbone like a jack-knife.

I asked about constipation. He gave me another motion—a peculiar, writhing and twisting movement—and fifteen minutes later came a complete evacuation!

Hobart Bradstreet frankly gives the full credit for his conspicuous success to these simple secrets of SPINE-MOTION. He has traveled about for years, conditioning those whose means permitted a specialist at their beck and call. I met him at the Roycroft Inn, at East Aurora. Incidentally, the late Elbert Hubbard and he were great pals; he was often the "Fra's" guest in times past. But Bradstreet, young as he looks and feels, thinks he has chased around the country long enough. He has been prevailed upon to put his **Spine-Motion** method in form that makes it now generally available.

HOBART BRADSTREET, THE MAN WHO DECLINES TO GROW OLD

I know what these remarkable mechanics of the spine have done for me. I have checked up at least twenty-five cases. With all sincerity I say nothing in the whole realm of medicine or specialism can quicker re-make, rejuvenate and restore one. I wish you could see Bradstreet himself. He is arrogantly healthy; he doesn't seem to have any nerves. Yet he puffs incessantly at a black cigar that would floor some men, drinks two cups of coffee at every meal, and I don't believe he averages seven hours' sleep. It shows what a sound nerve-mechanism will do. He says a man's power can and should be unabated up to the age of 60, in every sense, and I have had some astonishing testimony on that score.

Would you like to try this remarkable method of "coming back"? Or, if young, and apparently normal in your action and feelings, do you want to see your energies just about doubled? It is easy. No "apparatus" is required. Just Bradstreet's few, simple instructions, made doubly clear by his photographic poses of the five positions. Results come amazingly quick. In less than a week you'll have new health, new appetite, new desire, and new capacities; you'll feel years lifted off mind and body. This miracle-man's method can be tested without any advance risk. If you feel enormously benefited, everything is yours to keep and you have paid for it all the enormous sum of $3.00! Knowing something of the fees this man has been accustomed to receiving, I hope his naming $3.00 to the general public will have full appreciation.

The $3.00 which pays for everything is not sent in advance, nor do you make any deposit or payment on delivery. Try how it feels to have a full-length spine, and you'll henceforth pity men and women whose nerves are in a vise!

HOBART BRADSTREET, Suite 5535,
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March 30th, 1925

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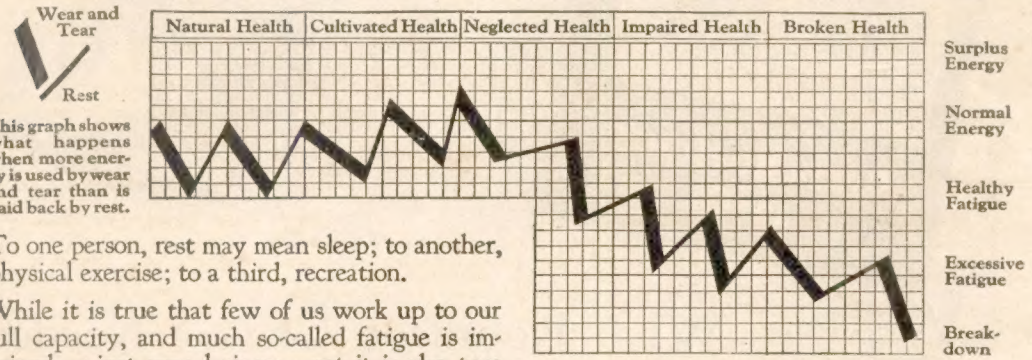
Volume 51
Number 6

Pay Yourself Back

ARE you tired? It is getting close to the time of year when people talk of feeling "all tired out" and there is much discussion of spring tonics. If you are fatigued and there is nothing organically wrong, the tonic you need and probably the only one you need is the right kind of rest to restore your energy.

If hard physical work is making you feel "all in" you may require more hours of sleep than usual even though this may mean temporarily giving up some form of amusement. Perhaps you are not eating the right amount of energy-making food. If you are a mental worker the kind of rest you probably need is exercise in fresh air. If excessive emotion is making you tired, the right kind of recreation probably will help you.



This graph shows what happens when more energy is used by wear and tear than is paid back by rest.

To one person, rest may mean sleep; to another, physical exercise; to a third, recreation.

While it is true that few of us work up to our full capacity, and much so-called fatigue is imagined or just pure laziness—yet it is also true that many people work far beyond their strength without realizing the danger.

A certain amount of fatigue after exertion is natural, but excessive fatigue is Nature's safety-device for warning that rest is needed. When you are over-tired, you are more susceptible to disease.

What brings about excessive fatigue? Usually over-strain—either physical or mental—and insufficient rest. Because your activity is both of the body and the mind, and one reacts on the other, your fatigue is a close interlacing of physical and mental weariness. Neither can be relieved separately. Worry, fear, resentment, discontent and depression also cause fatigue. The tired man is often a worried man, and the worried man is usually a tired man.

If you tire too easily and if rest does not put you back in good condition, it is more than likely that your health is affected and needs attention.

Workers—take warning! Pay back the energy that you take out of yourself. As the years mount up, longer and longer periods of rest are necessary to make restoration. The "spring tonic" that you need most likely is just a rearrangement of your hours of work, play and rest, and not medicine.

Employers of labor are coming to find that excessive, unnecessary fatigue entails loss of production and loss of earning power. It is said to be a factor in the occurrence of work accidents and is closely related to the cause or aggravation of most cases of severe sickness.

Tests have shown that in connection with certain occupations output can be increased and fatigue decreased by arranging rest periods. Here in the Home Office of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, our more than 9000 employees have two rest periods, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. These periods of relaxation have a beneficial effect on both the work and the worker.

There are many hours of the day when men and women do not work. The good use of these hours is as important to health as is the right use of working hours. The Metropolitan has published a booklet, "What Would You Do With 36,000,000 Minutes (70 years of life)?" and another on "Industrial Hygiene." Either or both, of these booklets, will be mailed free to those who ask for them.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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One Complete Novel, A New Serial and Two Complete Novelettes

"UNDERSTAND me," cried *Tros* of Samothrace. "If I don't rescue my father from Cæsar, I will do such damage to the Romans as shall make them remember me." "THE ENEMY OF ROME" a complete novel of Cæsar's invasions of Britain, by Talbot Mundy, is in the next issue.

CALVERT'S standing in Allobar was little better than a native's; but what he could hear, what the other whites were deaf to, were the ominous rumblings that echoed from The Street of N'ri. "CALVERT OF ALLOBAR" a four-part story of Nigeria, by Robert Simpson, begins in the next issue.

WHEN the revolution broke out *Angus McGregor* was penniless, jobless, and not very sober. As soon, however, as he heard the exploding shells and saw *Cumbanchero's* terrible machete men the spirit of his fighting forefathers swept him along on the high tide of the revolt. "THE CABLEMAN" a complete novelette by Percy Charles Chandler is in the next issue.

THE mining camp was too rough-and-ready for *Jones*. Tricked, robbed and insulted, he lost all self-respect until he fell in with "*Smilin'* " *Joe Merril* and learned the meaning of courage and honor. When the crisis came he was ready. "THE WAY OF A MAN—AND A HORSE," is a complete novelette by Everett Saunders in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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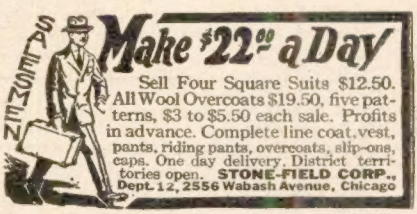

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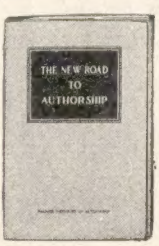

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Author of "The Lovable Liar," "The Dead-Line," etc.

"IF I had rheumatism like you've got, I'd sure head for the hot springs. Yuh can boil it out easier'n any other way."

The owner of Piute leaned back, braced his bony elbows on the bar, spat wisely and squinted at the two cowboys, who were draped against the bar beside him.

"Hashknife" Hartley, a tall, thin, serious-faced cowboy, was standing on one leg, much in the attitude of a stork, except that his knee naturally bent the other way.

"Sleepy" Stevens, Hashknife's partner, was of medium height, with a grin-wrinkled face and serious eyes. There was nothing colorful nor romantic about their raiment or physical appearance. They were clad in well-worn overalls, nondescript shirts, high-heeled boots and sombrero hats.

Their cartridge belts were scarred, weathered, as were their holsters, from which protruded the plain wood butts of single-action Colt six-shooters. They wore no coats. Hashknife's vest was little more than a wrinkled piece of cloth, suspended string-like from his shoulders, affording him pocket room for his tobacco and cigaret papers.

"Which way do yuh head for a hot springs, pardner?" asked Sleepy, making cabalistic marks on the scarred bar top with the bottom of his wet glass. "I'm goin' to put this lean pardner of mine on to boil."

"Aw, I'll be all right," protested Hashknife, flexing his aching leg.

"You won't be until yuh are," flared Sleepy. "Yuh can't ride a horse thataway. I've done used up a bottle of horse liniment

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on yuh, and all it's done is to make yuh smell."

"Rheumatism ain't no fun." Thus the proprietor. "I sure had it ache —— out of me a few years ago."

"Didja go to a hot spring?"asked Sleepy.

"Shore did. I went up into Hawk Hole and b'iled out up there. That sulphur water smells like all the bad aigs of the world had been busted; but it knocked my rheumatism."

"Where's this here Hawk Hole?" asked Hashknife, interested.

"South of here, about thirty mile. I dunno whether yuh can use the springs now or not. Belongs to 'Big Medicine' Hawkworth, and he ain't so friendly as he might be."

"We'd take a chance on him, if Hashknife was able to ride that far," said Sleepy.

"Yuh might go by stage. She comes through here about midnight and changes horses here. On 'count of the heat they make the drive from Caliente at night. They go to Pinnacle; but in yore case they might swing around by Hawkworth's place and let yuh off. If they don't, it's only two miles from Pinnacle."

"That sounds good t' me," declared Sleepy. "How does she listen to you, pardner?"

"Well, all right, Sleepy. I'd go any place to get rid of this —— that's twistin' my muscles. I ain't slept for three nights and days hand-runnin'. If this Hawkworth person tries to deny me a chance to boil the pain out of my carcass, I'll try and make him see the error of his ways."

"He prob'ly will deny yuh," said the proprietor. "C'mon and let's see if supper is ready."

PIUTE consisted of one building, a long, low adobe structure, separated into three parts: A saloon, a dining room and kitchen combined and a place to sleep. Behind this long building was a shed-like stable, corrals and a well.

Its only excuse for existence was to act as a stage station, or a night haven for those who traveled the road from Caliente to Pinnacle. Piute was always hot, except at night. To the north the road disappeared through mesquite covered flats, while to the south it twisted higher into the hills; rocky hill, where grew stunted pine, piñon and juniper; down into a land where the law held little sway, where only a range of hills separated them from the land of *mañana*.

Hashknife managed to limp into the dining room, assisted by Sleepy, flopped into a chair and did justice to a feed of tortillas, frijoles and coffee.

"You ain't natives down in this here country, are yuh?" asked the proprietor.

"What makes yuh think that?" grinned Sleepy.

"Jist seen yuh blowin' on yore frijoles. Yuh can't cool no chili pepper by blowin' on it, pardner."

"My mistake," grinned Sleepy. "The danged things are hot."

"Need 'em inside yuh down here. Hot food is the stuff in this climate. Eskimo would explode on it. Never been over in Hawk Hole, have yuh?"

"Never heard of it," said Hashknife.

"Town of Pinnacle's over there. Ain't much of a town. Lot of mines back in the Greenhorn country and they all outfits down in Pinnacle. Old Big Medicine Hawkworth owns most of Hawk Hole. Stage line does quite a business, haulin' supplies, miners and the kind of folks that clutter up a minin' town. Pinnacle ain't exactly in the Hole—kinda on the rim of it. Them hot springs are shore good for rheumatism, y'betcha. There's cold springs there, too. Big Medicine has been there twenty-five year, and he shore hooked on to most of the place."

"Does he run any cattle?" asked Sleepy.

"Yeah. He has the Tumblin' H iron. The Hole is a dandy place for to run cows, except that she's almost too close to the border."

"We might get a job," smiled Sleepy. "I'd punch cows while you boil out, Hashknife."

"Yeah, yuh might," agreed the proprietor. "But I'm bettin' yuh won't. Big Medicine will prob'ly tell yuh that yuh can't take a soak in his hot springs, and tell yuh to git to —— off his place. He's a old squaw-man—meaner than ——.

"Some folks say that Big Medicine is English, English from the old country. We don't see much of him. He's been out this far jist once since I've been here at Piute. I've heard folks say that he's crazy. I dunno whether he is or not. Anyway, I do know that he wants folks to leave him alone—and they mostly always do the second time."

Hashknife grimaced with pain as he

shoved back from the table and tried to cross his knees.

"Does this Big Medicine person mind his own business?" he asked.

"Hm-m-m—well, I s'pose so. Down in this country yuh can hear all kinds of talk. It mostly goes into one of my ears and out the other, bein' as I ain't noways situated where I can talk a lot about my fellermen and keep my scalp where she belongs. He ain't never bothered me; so I say he's all right."

Hashknife and Sleepy did not ask for any further information. They were in a strange country, whither they had drifted; wanderers into the cattle country of the

Southwest. They had found things but little different from those in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, except for the desert stretches, style of architecture and lack of streams.

All had been well until Hashknife had contracted rheumatism, which had crippled him so badly that he suffered keenly in riding. Sleepy had doctored him to the best of his limited ability, but the pain had grown steadily worse, and they both knew that it was a case of seeking medical assistance at once.

The arrival of the midnight stage interrupted their three-handed game of seven-up. It required four horses to haul the heavy stage over the grades ahead, and the proprietor assisted in changing teams.

The driver was a big, gruff Norwegian, with a big beard and a heavy head of hair, which stood up on his head like the roach of a grizzly bear.

The only passenger was a young man, well dressed, black haired and with a thin, dark face. He was hardly past twenty years of age, but his mouth and eyes already showed lines of dissipation. He drank whisky at the bar and climbed back into the stage while Hashknife and Sleepy were tying their horses at the boot of the stage.

"You got de rheu-maticks?" asked the driver, when he noticed that Hashknife had difficulty getting aboard.

"That's what she feels like," grunted Hashknife." I never had it before, but they say she acts like this."

"Yah, she does. You go to Pinnacle, eh?"

"The hot springs."

"So? To de hot springs, eh? All right."

His long whip snapped in the moonlight, the four horses sprang into life, and the stage to Pinnacle went lurching and grinding up the grades; swinging wide on the narrow turns, where a driver is only allowed one mistake.

OVER the top of the hill they swung back into another valley, a fairyland in the blue of the moonlight. The road was rough, badly engineered as to grades, but the driver swore in his own tongue, plied his long whip without stint or threw his weight on a protesting brake on the steep pitches.

The young man had nothing to say. He smoked innumerable cigarets and huddled down in his seat. Hashknife suffered in silence, while Sleepy whistled unmusically between his teeth and cursed the driver.

"He's hit every rock so far," he told Hashknife. "I'll bet yuh even money that this —— equipage don't hold together to reach Pinnacle."

Sleepy turned to the young man.

"Have you ever been over this road, pardner?"

The young man removed his cigaret.

"No," he said.

"Think you'll ever go agin'?"

"Maybe."

Sleepy laughed and stretched out his legs.

"You won't never get hung for talkin' too much."

"What do you mean?" asked the stranger coldly.

"Oh, ——!"

Sleepy shifted his seat and rolled a cigaret. Hashknife forgot his pains long enough to laugh. Thereafter all conversation ceased, except from the driver. Stretches of smooth road lulled the passengers to sleep, only to shock them back with lurching bumps

that even drew profanity from the lips of the driver.

About twenty-five miles of the journey had been completed. The road wound down the side of a mountain, twisting around the heads of deep, heavily timbered draws and out on to moonlit points, where far below stretched the haze of Hawk Hole. Here the roadbed was more smooth and the passengers dozed.

Suddenly the driver swore viciously, shoved on the brake until the rear wheels almost skidded off the grade. Sleepy was flung off his seat and he fell across Hashknife's lap, colliding with the stranger.

For several moments they were confused, dazed; and when they turned to the open windows of the stage, they looked into the muzzles of two shotguns, which were plainly defined in the moonlight.

"Stay jist like yuh are," ordered a clear voice. "We can see yuh plenty plain, gents."

The holdup men had their backs to the moon, which flung its rays into the stage, and Sleepy knew that a motion toward his holster would invite one or both of those shotguns to send a wicked shower of lead into them.

"Lift up yore hands," ordered the voice again, and all three men complied. "Now git out of there, one at a time."

Sleepy came out first and lined up against the side of the stage, while behind him came the stranger. Sleepy's holster had twisted behind him. It was difficult for Hashknife to get out, and the men swore at him for his slowness.

"He's got rheumatism, dang yuh!" snorted Sleepy.

"Excuse me," laughed one of the men. "Now line up."

One other man was helping himself to the strong-box, while the driver sat stolidly in his seat, arms reaching toward the sky. He yanked the strong-box out across the front wheel and let it fall into the dirt.

The man who had handled the box was carrying a revolver in one hand, and now he came back to those who were watching the passengers. The men were all masked. The man with the revolver looked at the passengers closely.

Suddenly, and with apparently no reason, he threw up his revolver and fired point-blank at the stranger. The action was so sudden, so uncalled for, that Hashknife and Sleepy instinctively ducked.

"Stand still, —— yuh!" roared one of the shotgun men.

The stranger went to his knees, groped blindly for a moment and sprawled on his face.

For several moments not a sound was heard. Then the man who fired the shot shoved his gun back into his holster.

"The —— fool reached for a gun," he said slowly. "Shove the rest of 'em back into the stage."

Hashknife turned and climbed back inside, while one man picked up the strong-box and walked around the team. Sleepy got inside, menaced by those two guns, and sat down. The two men turned and started around the team, while Sleepy swore softly, swung his belt around and jerked out his gun.

"Take it easy, pardner," cautioned Hashknife. "They never hurt us."

"They killed that poor ——," replied Sleepy angrily. "He never tried to pull a gun, Hashknife."

Sleepy stepped outside, gun in hand, but the men had disappeared. The driver was starting to get down.

"Held up, I'm a son of a gun!" he snorted, as he almost fell off the hub.

Sleepy knelt down and examined the stranger. He was breathing heavily, painfully, and was unconscious.

"Well, he ain't dead," declared Sleepy. "How far is it to town, driver?"

" 'Bout five six mile. I'm never be held up before, I'm a son of a gun!"

"Put him in here," ordered Hashknife.

Sleepy and the driver lifted the wounded man inside and eased him into a seat. He was as limp as a rag, so Sleepy sat beside him, holding him upright.

"Drive as fast as yuh can," ordered Hashknife. "This man needs a doctor right now."

"You bet you," agreed the driver. "I'll go like ——"

He was as good as his word. Hashknife and Sleepy were not at all faint hearted, but that driver brought prayers to their lips before the running team reached the bottom of Hawk Hole. In fact he had caused Hashknife to forget his rheumatism.

"How are yuh standin' it, Hashknife?" asked Sleepy.

"He either scared or bumped it all out of me," replied Hashknife.

"I'll betcha. There's some things that

even rheumatism won't stand for, I reckon. We ought to be close to town. That driver said five or six miles, and we fell that far."

IN A few minutes they drove into the sleeping town of Pinnacle and stopped in front of a stage station. Daylight was flooding the hill now. A sleepy-eyed individual opened the door of the stage-office and came out to them. Across the street glowed the dim light of an oil lamp over a poker game.

Somewhere a cheap phonograph screeched a tune, following a squeaky announcement that it was being sung by So-and-So, for for the So-and-So "phonograph cuc-cuc-company of New Yar-r-rk and Par-Par-Paris."

It did not take the excited driver long to blurt out the fact that he had been held up, robbed of the strong-box, and that he had a dying man inside the stage. The sleepy-eyed one snapped into life. He turned around twice, evidently undecided just what to do—and did nothing.

"Yore best bet is to take this feller to a doctor," declared Hashknife.

"That's right," agreed the sleepy-eyed one. "Doc Henry lives jist outside town, Pete. He ain't such a —— good doctor, I don't suppose, but he's all we've got. Say, the sheriff is here, I think. Anyway, he was here last night, and mebbe he's over there in that poker game right now. Lemme look."

He ran across the street into a saloon, and was back in a minute, followed by a short, heavy man, who questioned the driver regarding the affair.

"Is the man still alive?" he asked.

"He won't be, if yuh don't quit yappin' and get him to a doctor," declared Sleepy.

The sheriff came closer and peered into the stage. He was a serious-looking person, round eyed and with a heavy mustache. After a short inspection he nodded and turned to the driver.

"Take him to the doctor, Pete."

"You go along, Sheriff?" asked the driver.

"No, I can't. I'm right in a big pot. See yuh later."

He turned and hurried back across the street, while the stage went on down to the doctor's home.

Doctor Henry answered their knock, arrayed in a nightgown and a blanket, and told them to bring the man into the house.

An examination showed that the young man had been shot through the left shoulder, and that the bullet was still in him. He had lost considerable blood, but the doctor assured them that the wound was not necessarily fatal.

"I don't know him," replied the driver, in answer to the doctor's questions. "He ride from Caliente. He say somet'ing 'bout San Francisco. He don't talk much. Maybe somebody know him here."

They left the doctor and went back. Pinnacle was beginning to wake up now. The driver let Hashknife and Sleepy have space in his stable for their horses, and offered them a bed at the rear of the stage office.

"That —— hotel no good," he told them. "Too much bug. You have good bed in my place—cost not'ing."

They thanked him kindly and accepted his offer. Hashknife's rheumatism was less painful now; and while Pinnacle awoke to the fact that the stage had been robbed and a man shot, Hashknife and Sleepy burrowed down in a fairly good bed and forgot that such things as wounded men and stage robbers ever existed.

AND at about the same time a cowboy had brought a message to Big Medicine Hawkworth. He was one of Hawkworth's men, a thin, wry-necked cowboy, with badly bowed legs and bat ears.

The living-room of Hawkworth's home was almost a hovel. The ceiling sagged badly and every board in the bare floor creaked in a different key. One or two faded pictures hung askew on the walls and in the center of the ceiling hung an old oil-burning chandelier with a cracked chimney and a badly bent reflector.

Near the center of the room, huddled in a striped blanket, sat Big Medicine Hawkworth, a veritable giant in stature, but as lean as a wolf. His big, bony head was covered with a huge mop of yellowish white hair, which flared out from his ears, reaching to his cheek bones, and giving him the appearance of wearing crumpled horns.

His forehead was broad and high, his eyes set far apart and hidden beneath heavy brows. The nostrils of his finely chiseled nose flared out above a wide, heavy mouth, which sagged just enough to show a glimpse

of heavy teeth. The lower jaw was firm, and perhaps just a trifle belligerent.

Just now he humped in his chair, as if asleep, his huge hands gripping slightly at the blanket at his knees. The cowboy who had brought the message squatted on his heels beside the door, slowly rolling a cigaret.

A big, black cat, its eyes glistening in the rays from the lamp, came in past the squatting cowboy, shrank quickly away from his reaching hand, darted across the room and sprang on to the table near Big Medicine.

The stairs creaked noisily as another cowboy came down into the hall, carrying his boots. He was a stolid-faced, pudgy-looking person. His socks were not mates, and one of them was minus the whole toe. He peered into the sitting-room, nodded at the squatting cowboy.

Against the wall, beyond Big Medicine, was a cheap phonograph. The bootless cowboy, deposited his boots in the hall, crossed the room over the protesting boards and squatted down to put on a record.

Big Medicine did not look up. He knew that "Musical" Matthews had come down the stairs, and was going to play something on the phonograph before breakfast. He had been doing the same thing before breakfast for five years.

From the kitchen came breakfast odors, the rattle of dishes, the unmistakable rattle of stove lids. From somewhere outside the house came the sound of a man's voice raised in song:

"I'll saddle my pony and feed him some ha-a-a-ay;
And I'll buy me a bottle to drink on the wa-a-ay."

Big Medicine lifted his head slightly, as the phonograph scratched and spluttered the opening of "The Holy City." He had heard it every morning for five years—or one just like it. It was Musical Matthews' favorite.

In fact it was the only one Musical Matthews played. He sat entranced until the last notes of the singer faded out in a splutter, like some one frying eggs in a hot pan. Then he got up, crossed the creaking floor to his boots, which he drew on slowly, and went out to the wash bench, where the other singer was washing his face and hands.

Big Medicine lifted his head and looked at the cowboy squatting at the door.

"The stage was held up, was it? And a man shot?"

"That's what I heard," replied the cowboy. "The sheriff came back to the poker game and told us. He didn't know how much they got, nor he didn't know how bad hurt this man was."

Big Medicine nodded slowly and shifted his hands.

"And these two strange men, Ike. What did they look like?"

"I didn't see 'em close, boss. One was tall and kinda limped; the other wasn't so tall."

"All right, Ike."

The cowboy uncoiled and clumped outside. Big Medicine took a crumpled letter from inside his blanket and looked at it. The cowboy had brought it from Pinnacle. He seemed interested in a few lines, which read:

> I am sending you he $20,000 by express, in a plain package. The valuation is just enough to have it carried in their safe, but not enough to tempt any one to steal it.

Big Medicine put the paper back into his shirt and closed his eyes again. The black cat seemed to ooze off the table on to his lap, and one of his big hands caressed its head. A door creaked open and an Indian woman came softly down the hall to the living-room door.

She was a big woman, past middle age, with the stolid features of her race. Her calico dress was ill-fitting, but clean. Big Medicine lifted his head and looked at her for a long time before he said—

"Somebody hold up stage last night, Lucy."

The squaw merely stared at him unmoved.

"My money was on that stage," he told her. "It was much money—all we had. I was goin' to buy half of the Yellow King mine with that money."

"From Jim Reed?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"No good. Jim Reed bad. You lose just same. Come and eat."

Big Medicine squinted at her for several moments before getting to his feet. He was so tall that he had to stoop under the hanging lamp.

"Lucy," he said, "there are times when I thank the good God that I have you instead of a white woman. You never complain, never nag; trust me implicitly, believe in your dumb way that what I do is best. By the gods, there are times when I thoroughly appreciate you, Lucy."

"Sometime—not so much," she said slowly.

Big Medicine reached up and turned down the big lamp, before following her out into the hall and down to the dining room, which was a kitchen and dining room combined.

A girl was standing at the stove, baking hot cakes, while Ike Marsh, Musical Matthews and Cleve Davis, the singing cowpuncher, sat at the table, eating.

Big Medicine sat down at the head of the table, still wearing his blanket, and the girl came to him, carrying a platter heaped with steaming cakes. She was unmistakably a half-breed girl, but almost as white as Big Medicine; a tall, lithe, big-eyed girl, of about eighteen, with a long braid of raven hair thrown carelessly across one shoulder.

She was the daughter of Big Medicine and Lucy; half-English, half Nez Perce. Big Medicine had brought his squaw from the Northwest, and they had named the girl Kwann, which, in the trade language of the Northwest, means Glad. But she was known to every one of Hawk Hole as Wanna.

Big Medicine did not realize that Wanna had suddenly grown from a gangling little girl to a handsome young lady; but Lucy knew it. She could tell it in the admiring glances of the cowboys when she and Wanna went to Pinnacle to trade; she could read it in the sidewise glances of Big Medicine's own cowboys, and from the fact that they were always ready to bring wood or water for the kitchen.

"I seen Torres in Pinnacle last night," offered Ike Marsh, his mouth filled with food. "Him and Luis Garcia comes in to the Greenback saloon."

Big Medicine's brows lifted slightly, but he did not comment on the appearance of two men he had ordered out of the country. Pedro Torres, or "Pete," as he was better known, was an unprincipled rascal, flashy dresser, handsome in a way, and too clever ever to make an honest living.

Luis Garcia was Pete's shadow; a low-cast, half Mexican, half Apache.

"I seen Jim Reed, too." Ike was willing to pass out all the information he had, regardless of its interest. "Jim had a drink with Torres."

"And how much did you lose?" asked Musical.

"Not a dern cent. I was in seventeen dollars and I cashed in seventy-three dollars and four-bits."

"'Faro' Lannin' must be gittin' easy," grinned Cleve. "He never let me win that much."

"Faro wasn't playin'. 'Arkansaw' Jones was runnin' the game."

Big Medicine looked up from eating, his deep-set eyes speculative.

"One of you boys go to Pinnacle and see how bad that feller was hurt," he ordered. "The other two of yuh take a swing back toward the Devil's Corral and look around."

The Devil's Corral was Big Medicine's appellation for the wire fence which indicated the boundary line between Mexico and the United States. Big Medicine had no use for a Mexican, and the brown men on the opposite side of the line reciprocated, as far as Big Medicine was concerned.

"I'll go to town," said Ike, shoving back from the table.

"Sure yuh would," grinned Musical. "That seventy-three dollars is burnin' a hole in yore pocket."

"Nawsir!" Ike shook his head violently. "Lot of that is goin' into a new saddle—mebbe all of it. If I play a-tall, it'll be jist to see if I can't win enough to add a new pair of chaps, thassall."

"Kiss yore money good-by," laughed Cleve. "It's fellers like you that buy diamonds for fellers like Faro Lannin'. C'mon, Musical."

They went outside, rattling their spurred heels on the rough boards. Lucy sat down at the table.

"Me and Wanna go to town bimeby," she said. "Grocery most all gone. You want somethin'?"

Big Medicine shook his head and got up from the table. Wanna came from the stove and gave her mother a cup of coffee. Then she left the room. Big Medicine looked after her, a quizzical expression in his eyes. He turned to see Lucy looking after Wanna.

"Wanna is gettin' to be a big girl," he said slowly.

Lucy looked up at him.

"Yeah—woman now."

"Eighteen," said Big Medicine softly. "Eighteen years old. She's pretty."

"She's half-breed, Big Medicine."

The big man turned his head slowly and looked toward the door where Wanna had made her exit.

"Half-breed," he muttered.

The squaw made a sucking noise, as she drank coffee from her saucer.

"She marry greaser, Mexican, bad *hombre* some kind," said the squaw slowly.

There was no bitterness in her voice, but Big Medicine knew what was in her heart.

"Mebbe not, Lucy," he said. "Wanna is good girl."

"Mebbe not?" Lucy lowered her saucer and stared up at him. "You say that? Will a crow try to mate with an eagle, Big Medicine?"

He shifted his eyes from her face and looked away. She was but quoting his own words, words which had been spoken years before. But the squaw had not forgotten them.

"If the crow thinks he is an eagle," he said softly.

"Wanna knows."

Lucy got up from the table and began clearing away the dishes. Big Medicine watched her, leaning one big hand on the table. His blanket had fallen from his massive shoulders, exposing a torso that would have been a credit to any professional athlete. Perhaps age had slowed those rope-like muscles, but had sapped little of their strength.

After a few moments he replaced his blanket and turned to the doorway.

"Wanna knows," repeated Lucy, as if to herself. "But she is only a squaw. Squaw don't count."

She did not look at Big Medicine, but busied herself at the stove. For several moments he looked at her, and seemed about to speak, but changed his mind. His blanketed shoulders shrugged slightly, as he turned, ducked his head and went back into the living-room, where the loose boards creaked under his heavy tread, and the rocking chair squeaked a protest when he sat down.

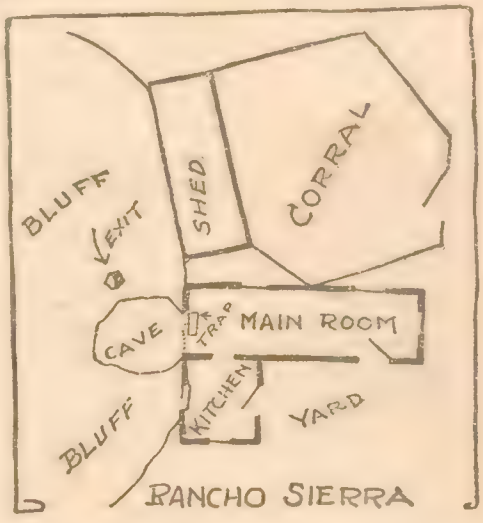
IT WAS about noon when Hashknife and Sleepy awoke. Hashknife had slept well for the first time in several nights, but was still crippled. They dressed and went into the street. The stage driver, Olsen, had slept in the same room with them, but had managed to dress without awakening them.

There was nothing pretentious about Pinnacle. In fact there was little excuse for its existence, except as an outfitting point for the Greenhorn mines. The buildings were mostly built of adobe, and none of them more than one story.

On the west side of the street was a blacksmith shop, stage station, post-office, two saloons and a restaurant, while on the opposite side were two saloons, two stores, a hotel and an assay office.

One of these saloons was the Greenback, which boasted a full assortment of gambling paraphernalia, a small dance hall and enough "girls" to make things interesting for the lonely miners or cowpunchers.

There were no sidewalks in Pinnacle. The more pretentious of the buildings had porches or wooden awnings, supported by



rough posts, and practically every building had a long hitch-rack in front, making almost a continual railing on each side of the street.

Hashknife and Sleepy found the sheriff, Lon Pelly, in the one café, and he made room for them at his table, after introducing himself. Their names meant nothing to the sheriff, who asked them for an account of the holdup and shooting. He had already had a talk with the stage driver.

"Got any idea who this young feller is?" asked Hashknife, after he had told what they knew about it.

The sheriff shook his head quickly.

"I dunno who he is. The doctor says he's goin' to live. He's conscious now."

"How much of a haul did they make, Sheriff?"

"Dunno that either. The way bills of the express company were in the treasure box;

so they got the whole works. I don't reckon anybody'll know until the express company checks up on it."

"What gits me," observed Sleepy, "is why they shot that young feller. He didn't reach for no gun."

"Didn't, eh?"

"——, no! His hands were still in the air when he fell. It was a dirty deal, I tell yuh."

"Don't yell," cautioned the sheriff. "Pinnacle is a place where folks with soft voices live longer than yelpers. No offense, my friend—just be cautious; *sabe?*"

"Thanks," grunted Sleepy and attacked his ham and eggs.

"This ain't the county seat, is it?" asked Hashknife.

"This place?" The sheriff grinned. "Caliente is the county seat. Me and my deputy been back in the Greenhorn country on a case. Don't get in here very often. Pinnacle ain't favorable to sheriffs."

A man came in and looked owlishly around. He was as tall as Hashknife, with a long, thin face, wispy mustache, which grew heavier on one side than the other, faded blond hair and a nose that had been, at some time, knocked slightly out of plumb with the rest of his features.

He goggled at the sheriff, grinned widely and pointed at him with a shaking finger.

"There y'are, li'l angel," he gurgled. "Hol' still now."

He came slowly across the room and almost fell over the table in seating himself. The sheriff grunted disgustedly, and it irritated the tall one.

"Ain't I good enough t' set here?" he asked indignantly. "Whazza matter 'ith me, I'd crave t' know. Yesshir, I'd crave a li'l information, tha's what I'd crave."

"Yo're goin' to crave a punch in the nose, if yuh don't sober up," declared the sheriff.

"Thasso?"

The tall one looked drunkenly at Hashknife and Sleepy. Satisfied with his inspection he turned back to the sheriff.

"My ——, Lonnie, yuh wouldn't jump on to me, wouldja?" he asked tearfully. "I'm one of yore mos' val'able friends. I'd do anythin' for you, Lonnie—you sawed-off, bat-eared, bug-headed cross between a—Lonnie, I like you, and yore cruel words cuts me to the quick, that's what they do."

"Yeah, I'll betcha."

The sheriff turned and introduced his deputy, "Cloudy" Day, to Hashknife and Sleepy.

"He ain't worth a —— to me," declared the sheriff. "I dunno how I stand for him. He keeps sober in Caliente, 'cause he's got a wife that whales —— out of him for drinkin'; but when he gits up here he forgets her."

"Noshir." Cloudy shook his head. "Ain't true. I defy myshelf to get that drunk, and I ain't curshed with a big mem'ry. My wife is a shister of our estimable sheriff, and—" Cloudy grinned widely—"if he didn't give me a job, he'd have to board both of us; so he makes me earn m' keep."

"Lot of truth in that, too," agreed the sheriff.

They left Cloudy trying to decide what to eat, and went to the Greenback saloon. A few miners had come in from the camp at Greenhorn and were trying to beat one of the roulette wheels, but outside of that there was little going on there.

Ike Marsh was at the bar, talking to Faro Lanning, the owner of the Greenback. Lanning was a typical gambler, even to the waxed, black mustache and the diamond horseshoe in his shirt bosom. He nodded to the sheriff, gave Hashknife and Sleepy a sharp glance and turned back to the bar.

After the trio passed, he turned again and looked quizzically at Hashknife's limping gait. Further back in the room, Torres and Garcia sat at a little table; Garcia asleep, while Torres perused a Mexican newspaper. At sight of Hashknife and Sleepy, Torres tapped Garcia on the ankle with the toe of his polished boot, and the half-breed looked quickly around.

The sheriff wandered over to the roulette wheel, while Hashknife and Sleepy sat down at a table. A man came in from the rear, and passed them on his way to the bar; a portly, well-dressed Chinaman. He gave them a keen glance, as he passed, and went to the bar.

"No pokah today, Faro?" he asked, smiling broadly.

"Hello, Lee."

Faro removed his cigar and motioned the Chinaman to have a drink with him.

"No poker," he replied. "Nobody wants to play, I guess."

Torres and Garcia left their table and came past the bar, heading for the front door.

"Want to play pokah, Torres?" asked the Chinaman.

"Not today," said the Mexican with hardly an accent. "Little too early, anyway. Later, perhaps."

They went on outside, and Faro and the Chinaman turned back to their drinks.

"What do yuh think of this place?" asked Sleepy.

"Kinda peculiar," smiled Hashknife softly. "Them two at the bar are wonderin' who we are, and that flashy lookin' Mexican woke his pardner up to take a look at us.

"I've got a hunch that a Sunday school wouldn't do very much business in Pinnacle, Sleepy; but that ain't none of our business. I reckon we'll saddle up and hunt for them hot springs pretty soon. That stage driver scared a lot of rheumatism out of me last night, but most of it's comin' back."

The sheriff left the roulette game and came back to them.

"Do you know where the hot springs are?" asked Sleepy.

"Hot Springs? You mean the ones out at the Hawkworth ranch?"

"That's the ones."

"Yeah, I can tell yuh how to get there. It's only two miles. Do you know Big Medicine Hawkworth?"

"Never heard of him until last night," replied Hashknife. "They tell us the water is good for rheumatism."

"Yeah? Well, I suppose it is. Big Medicine is a queer sort of a jigger. He don't hardly leave the ranch. Ain't been out of Hawk Hole for twenty-five years, they tell me. Mebbe he'll let yuh bathe in his hot water, and mebbe he won't.

"He owns most of Hawk Hole, yuh see. Owns about all the water, and nobody can range cattle here, except him. Had kind of a little kingdom of his own, until the Greenhorn mines opened up and made an excuse for this town.

"Some of the boys say that the Hawkworth ranch is haunted. —— old house creaks all over, and there's black cats by the dozen, so they tell me. I dunno anythin' about it. I do know that he's got three cowpunchers that'll fight anythin'. That was one of 'em at the bar when we come in. Name's Ike Marsh."

"Ain't there any other cattle ranches in here?" asked Hashknife.

"Not in the Hole. East of here is the K 10 outfit. They're runnin' cattle in the hills. 'Baldy' Kern owns it. Baldy has six punchers with his outfit, and they ain't shrinkin' vi'lets, but he keeps his stock out of the Hole. Hawkworth don't seem to be tryin' to get rich. Ever' so often he runs a few head of stock out to Caliente, sells 'em to a buyer there and that's all.

"I reckon he's satisfied to set at home and kinda let the world alone. 'Tsall right, if yuh like it thataway. Ho hum-m-m-m—" he yawned widely—"I reckon I'll find Cloudy and start for home. Long ways to Caliente. If yuh want to go to Hawkworth's ranch, ride out the same way yuh came in last night. About a quarter of a mile out of town, take the road to the left."

The sheriff drifted away, and Hashknife and Sleepy went outside. An old, dilapidated buckboard, drawn by two gray horses, came into the street and drew up in front of a store. In it were Lucy and Wanna. Torres and Garcia were just coming out of the store as they drove up to the hitch rack, and Torres hurried out to tie the horses for them.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy sauntered down the street, passing the hitch rack and getting their first glance at the feminine members of the Hawkworth household. Hashknife looked sharply at the older woman. He was familiar with the tribes of the Northwest, and it seemed homelike to see a familiar face again.

Torres was talking to Wanna, who turned away from him and looked at Hashknife. He had seen many half-breed girls, but none as pretty as Wanna Hawkworth. Lucy spoke sharply to the girl and started for the store; but Torres laughed and tried to detain Wanna.

"Let her go," said Torres not unpleasantly. "It's been a long time since I had a chance to talk to you, Wanna."

"You no talk now," said Lucy flatly. "Come, Wanna."

The girl started to walk around Torres, but the Mexican again blocked her. He seemed so persistent in forcing his attentions upon her that Hashknife stopped and walked toward them. The girl looked at Hashknife, who limped up within a few feet of Torres.

Garcia had halted near the end of the hitch-rack, rolling a cigaret and evidently enjoying the scene—until Sleepy moved in

beside him, resting one arm on the top pole of the rack and squinting into the half-breed Apache's face.

Torres turned his head and looked at Hashknife, and as he did so, Wanna stepped past him and hurried to join her mother. Torres' face flushed slightly, and his eyes narrowed.

"I just wondered," said Hashknife slowly, half-apologetically, "if you had a match, pardner."

Torres' hand went to his pocket, but came away empty. He realized that Hashknife did not want a match. He turned his head and looked at Garcia, who was scowling at Sleepy.

"You want a match, eh?" said Torres slowly. "My friend, I am very sorry, but I have none."

"Thassall right," said Hashknife. "Much obliged just the same."

He walked past Torres and went into the store, followed by Sleepy, who was grinning widely. Torres scowled heavily and looked at Garcia.

"Who are these men?" demanded Torres in Spanish.

"How should I know," replied Garcia heavily. "I did not speak to the pig who grins only with his mouth."

"They are strangers here," mused Torres. "Last night they came on the stage."

"This morning," corrected Garcia. "They were talking with the sheriff, who is also a fool."

"A fool is one who thinks that others do not have brains," rebuked Torres. "A wise man overrates his opponent."

This was a trifle beyond the mentality of Garcia, but he nodded violently, being of an agreeable disposition.

Hashknife and Sleepy went into the general store, where Lucy and Wanna were at a counter buying groceries. The girl glanced sharply at them, but the old squaw gazed upon them frankly. She realized that they had saved Wanna from an embarrassing situation, and she was grateful.

"*Klahowya*," said Hashknife smiling.

The old squaw opened her mouth twice before she replied with the same word. It was the universal greeting used by both whites and Indians where she had been raised, and it had been many years since she had heard it spoken.

For several moments she seemed deep in thought. Then—

"*Mah-sie*," she said softly.

It had been difficult for her to remember "thank you" in that language.

Hashknife smiled and shook his head. Wanna was staring at him now. She did not understand the language. Hashknife and Sleepy purchased some tobacco and left the store, going over to the stage stable, where their horses had been put up.

"You made a hit with the old squaw," grinned Sleepy. "By golly, she sure grinned a heap. But, honest to grandma, didja ever see a prettier half-breed girl, Hashknife?"

"For once in my life, I've got to agree with yuh," grinned Hashknife. "She's pretty. It seems kinda funny to see a *klooch* from the Northwest down in this country. She's as far away from home as we are, and she's been away a long time, too. It took her a long time to remember the jargon. I reckon she's a Nez Percé or a Nespelem. Mebbe Flathead."

"Somethin' like that," agreed Sleepy as they saddled. "Anyway, that *tenas klooch-man* shore is pretty. A reg'lar Minnehaha Laughin' Water."

Hashknife turned from fastening a *latigo* and squinted at his partner.

"Aw, I know my loop's draggin'," grinned Sleepy. "Yuh don't need to chide me, tall-feller. Dang yuh, can't I admire beauty if I want to? I've got eyes and a heart."

"Yeah," drawled Hashknife. "When they passed around eyes and hearts yuh robbed the platter, but when the brains came you was all filled up. Git yore thoughts off beauty and kinda concentrate on my rheumatism. That's what we came here for."

"That's right, Hashknife. We've got to get you cured up, even if the pretty girls do show up to take my mind off yore aches."

They led their horses back to the street through the alley between the stage station and the post-office. Torres was standing between them and the door of the post-office, looking intently at the door. He did not hear the two men and horses come out of the alley.

Three riders were coming in from the east, their horses drifting along slowly. Then the post-office door opened and Wanna came out, followed closely by Lucy. With an exaggerated bow, Torres swept off his sombrero. Lucy grasped Wanna by the

arm, as if to turn her in the opposite direction, but Torres stepped in quickly and spoke to them.

His attitude was entirely apologetic, but his words were probably not, judging from the expression on the old squaw's face. Hashknife dropped his reins, and in three long strides had reached Torres. His right hand caught the slack-seat of Torres trousers, while his left twisted into the gorgeous silk muffler.

Torres ripped out an expressive Spanish oath, as his hands tried to draw a weapon, but Hashknife swung him aloft, whirled on his heels and fairly ran to the blacksmith shop, a short distance away, where the worthy smith was fitting shoes on a bad horse, and dumped the luckless Mexican headfirst into a very dirty slack tub.

This tub was made from a half-barrel, and was nearly full of inky water. The three riders whirled their horses up to the front of the shop and fairly fell out of their saddles. Sleepy had dropped the two sets of reins and was at the door of the shop ahead of the three men, as if to stop them from any interference.

The immersion of Torres seemed of great satisfaction to the blacksmith, whose buffalo-horn-like mustaches jiggled convulsively in a paroxysm of silent mirth. Hashknife knew just about how long a human being might safely be immersed; so he kept Torres under for the full limit, while the three riders, blocked from an entrance by Sleepy, who was willing to forgo the pleasure of watching the ducking to prevent interference, grinned widely.

Torres was far from being gaudy when Hashknife drew him out, half-drowned and sat him against the forge to recover. Several other men, attracted by those at the entrance, came to see what was going on. Faro Lanning was one of these.

Torres' chin, which dripped dirty water and iron particles, was buried in the bosom of a once-ornate silk shirt, but now a dirty brown, as he wheezed audibly to draw air into his lungs. He was far from dead, but too water-soaked to care what went on around him.

Hashknife walked back to the door. The three riders looked him over critically, but said nothing.

"What was the matter?" asked Lanning, jerking his thumb in the general direction of Torres.

Hashknife squinted thoughtfully at Torres and back at Lanning.

"He forgot, I reckon."

"Forgot what?"

"Forgot that I asked him for a match."

LANNING scowled after Hashknife and Sleepy, who were heading for their horses, and turned to the three men who had ridden in.

"Do you know what it was all about?" he asked.

"No-o-o," drawled one of the men. "We didn't see that anythin' was wrong, until this tall puncher had Torres in both hands and was packin' him like a flag. He shore is deliberate, that feller. Haw, haw, haw, haw!"

Torres managed to get back to his feet and was clinging to the anvil. His eyes were red from the dirty water, and he was altogether mad, but his lips shut firmly, as he looked at the crowd in front of the wide doorway.

"Kinda looks like it was goin' to be a wet season," remarked the smaller of the three cowboys humorously.

He was a thin-faced, sallow-looking person, and as he removed his big hat to wipe the perspiration from the sweatband, he exposed a head which was totally bald. The sallow skin of his head seemed to be stretched so tightly over his skull that it wrinkled slightly in the back of his neck, and there was a red circle around it, marking the line of his hat.

Taking him all in all, "Baldy" Kern was not a beautiful object. His teeth were bad, his boots bulged from bunions, and he did not conceal the fact that the law was something that concerned him not.

The other two cowboys laughed raucously at his witticism. Perhaps they were amused; perhaps they laughed because Baldy Kern had laughed. At any rate, Torres' eyes flashed angrily, as he lurched past them and out into the street, where he stopped and looked around, looking for the man who had almost drowned him.

Both Hashknife and Sleepy were already heading for the Hawkworth ranch, and the two men were just driving away from the hitch rack farther up the street and across. Torres flapped his wet arms dismally and went stumbling across toward the Greenback saloon.

"Who are them two strange punchers?" asked Kern.

Lanning did not know any more than Kern did, but he said:

"I dunno. They spent a lot of time with the sheriff, if that means anything to you, Kern."

After delivering this veiled information, Lanning went back up the street, leaving Kern to think it over.

"Didja hear about the holdup last night?" asked the blacksmith.

Kern looked up quickly.

"What holdup?"

"Stage. Three men stuck her up back on the grades and swiped the treasure box. They shot a feller, too, a passenger. Didn't kill him."

"Who is he?" asked Kern.

"I dunno, Baldy. Stranger around here. Them two punchers was on the stage. Wounded man is down at the doctor's house."

Kern squinted thoughtfully over this information. Then—

"How much of a haul did they git?"

"I dunno."

It seemed a stock phrase with the blacksmith.

"Who was drivin' the stage—Olsen?"

"Yeah."

"Why did they shoot this stranger?"

"I dunno. Somebody said he went for his gun, but one of them punchers said it was a lie, that his hands were still in the air when he went down."

"Kinda queer," said Kern thoughtfully.

He shrugged his thin shoulders and went back to his horse. They crossed to the Greenback saloon hitch rack, and the blacksmith went back to work, grinning to himself. He did not like Torres.

Sleepy wore a wide grin as they rode away from Pinnacle, but Hashknife's face was serious. The incident had not seemed as humorous to him as it had to Sleepy.

"I ain't laughin' at that gaudy Mexican's bath," explained Sleepy. "I'm grinnin' to think that you even forgot to limp."

"Eh?" Hashknife looked up quickly and a grin twisted his lips. "By golly, that's right, Sleepy. I plumb forgot to limp. And that only goes to show that most of these diseases are all in yore head. I was plumb lame until I seen that feller tryin' to talk to the women, and then I forgot all about it. Right now it's commencin' to hurt me, 'cause I'm thinkin' about it."

"You sure gave that Mexican a coolin'-off, cowboy. He jist sizzled. I didn't see it all, 'cause them three fellers rode up kinda fast, and I thought mebbe they was goin' to try and stop yuh. I dunno why it is—" Sleepy's tone changed and he became mournful—"it seems like when there's any heroin' to be done I have to hold the horses."

Hashknife laughed, as he sifted a cigaret paper full of Durham.

"I wasn't tryin' to be a hero, Sleepy."

"You don't have to try—" Mournfully—"it jist comes kinda natural for you to do things like that. If I had tried it, I'd probably stubbed my toe before I got to him. Mebbe I'd 'a' got a few inches of steel in my anatomy and had to kill him."

"Mebbe I'll get a few inches of his steel yet," mused Hashknife. "He don't look like a feller that would take a baptisin' in a slack-tub and jist grin."

"Mebbe yuh will, tall feller. Life's a queer thing, ain't it? Here we come into this country to try and soak out a case of rheumatism; jist a harmless occupation. The first thing we do is to run into a holdup and a shootin' scrape."

"Well, that's all right, Sleepy."

"No, it ain't." Sleepy spoke with conviction. "It ain't noways all right. I can see yore nose twitchin' and yore ears hang down like the ears of a pointer dog or a blood-hound. It ain't all right, I tell yuh. It ain't none of our business."

"Well," laughed Hashknife, "what about it?"

Sleepy sighed and shifted himself.

"What about it? Hashknife, you know danged well what about it. Ever since I can remember, me and you have been gettin' off to just this kind of a start. Trouble hunts us, I tell yuh."

"And you shake hands with it, like it was a long-lost brother," grinned Hashknife. "If yo're born to be hung, you'll never choke to death on a fish-bone, Sleepy."

"All right," nodded Sleepy. "Just the same, I wish we wasn't here. Mebbe we can get the aches soaked out of you before they start heavin' lead at us. We don't *sabe* these folks down here. Likely got a lot of smart gunmen, too."

"Well, old pessimist, we won't even stop

at the Hawkworth ranch," decided Hashknife seriously. "If yo're so scared of trouble, we'll go right on. My rheumatism is a lot better, yuh know."

"No, we won't. We're goin' to get yuh fixed up, if we have to throw lead at every man in Hawk Hole. Just what do yuh reckon is wrong around here?"

Hashknife grinned under the shade of his wide sombrero and shook his head. He knew that Sleepy was not afraid of anything, and that he merely wanted an alibi to point back to, in case they got into serious trouble.

BUT Sleepy was right when he said that wherever they went trouble followed them. It seemed that Fate sent them from range to range to straighten out trouble. Time after time they brought peace to troubled cattle land, but they did not stay to enjoy the fruits of their labors. Something urged them to go on and on, always looking for the other side of the hill, and on the other side of the hill they found more trouble.

And in spite of the fact that they deplored their calling, both of them enjoyed it. They would not stay and enjoy the peace which they had brought. Always they rode on, looking for a place to settle down, where they might buy a little cattle outfit and live out their lives in peace; the end of the rainbow, which never would be found.

They were top-hand cowboys in every respect; gunmen, if you please, although neither of them could split a second on the draw, nor hit a dollar at forty paces. In fact they deplored their slowness with a gun, and assured each other that some day they would meet a regular gunman who would make them wish they had never worn a weapon.

It was Hashknife's brain that worked out their problems. He was able to see details that an ordinary man would miss, and he had an uncanny way of piecing things together until he was able to weave a net around a criminal that nothing could break.

Sleepy's mind did not travel fast enough to keep up with Hashknife, but he had an instinct that told him when to be ready for trouble to break; so between the two they had come practically unscathed from many a gun battle, where the souls of men had gone to their Maker with the reek of powder smoke on them.

All these things had made them fatalists, and to believe as Hashknife had said—

"If yo're born to be hung, you'll never choke to death on a fish-bone, Sleepy."

This was their belief, ingrained from many incidents, which proved their point—to them, at least.

HAWKWORTH'S Tumbling H ranch buildings were not much to look at. They were situated at the mouth of a cañon, which gave them a fair view of the broad expanse of Hawk Hole, and the elements had colored them until they blended into the gray of the landscape.

The ranch house was a two-story, half-adobe, half-frame construction. The house had originally been a one-story adobe, but later a frame had been built upon the original, giving it the appearance of a shack that had been lifted by a mud upheaval.

Behind it and to the right was a one-story adobe stable and a pole corral, where several horses drowsed in the heat. To the left of the ranch house was the little adobe blacksmith shop, and back of that, nearer the cañon, was the bath house.

There was a general air of don't-care-a-hang-how-we-look about the place. The front yard was a bare expanse of gravel and weeds, the fence fallen down in places. It might have well been a deserted ranch, instead of what it was.

Sleepy sniffed disgustedly, as they rode in past the sagging gate.

"For gosh sake, what smells around here?" he asked.

"That's the hot springs," grinned Hashknife. "Sulfur and a lot of other stuff. I sabe the smell. Some folks like to drink it."

"Some folks ought to be investigated," grunted Sleepy. "You may lose yore rheumatism, but you'll gain somethin' worse. Git that stuff in yore hair and see how long I stay around yuh."

A saddled horse was tied to a porch post, and as they dismounted its owner came out. And he stood not upon the order of his coming. The door had opened suddenly, and this man came out asprawl. He struck on his hands and knees at the edge of the top step, turned completely over and landed out in the gravel.

He was a short, heavily built man of about forty years of age, with a reddish mustache and a florid complexion.

For several moments he blinked violently,

got slowly to his feet and walked over to his horse. He turned his head to stare at Hashknife and Sleepy, but lost no time in mounting his horse and riding away. His hat came out in the yard with him, but he did not stop to pick it up.

Hashknife and Sleepy grinned at each other, and turned toward the doorway to see Big Medicine Hawkworth looking at them. He was stooped in the doorway, his big hands hanging low, his mop of white hair falling forward over his eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked sullenly.

Hashknife grinned and looked toward the cloud of dust, which marked the passing of the man who had been thrown out.

"Not what he got," said Hashknife.

Big Medicine lifted his head and squinted down the road. His attention was attracted by the hat in the yard. Slowly he came down the steps, picked up the hat and sailed it far off across the tumbledown fence. Hashknife and Sleepy watched him with amusement as he came back to the edge of the porch.

"Perhaps," he said, "that was a childish thing to do, but I was irritated byond endurance."

"Yeah," admitted Hashknife, "I reckon yuh was, pardner."

"Thank you," he said simply.

"I've got rheumatism," stated Hashknife," and somebody said that yore hot spring was a sure cure. How about it?"

He considered the question gravely.

"My dear man, there is no such a thing as a sure sure. It is all theory until proved by practice, and on each individual case. Diseases do not react the same in all bodies."

"You talk like a doctor," smiled Hashknife.

"I have studied," said Big Medicine slowly, pushing back the big mop of hair. "Perhaps I might better say, I have read."

"Outside of that," grinned Hashknife, "do I get to try out yore hot water?"

Big Medicine looked narrowly at Hashknife from under his bushy eyebrows for several moments. He seemed undecided. Then:

"I'm not in the habit of allowing strangers to use my spring, sir; but I would be a —— of a citizen if I refused to let a suffering man share what nature provided. You are welcome to use it as long as you find the need." He pointed to the rear of the ranch house. "You will find the bath house back there, sir. I think your nose will guide you."

He smiled and walked back into the house, closing the door behind him.

"Can yuh beat that?" grinned Hashknife. "Looks like one of the old Bible prophets, talks like a dictionary and throws men out through the front door. No wonder they say queer things about Big Medicine Hawkworth. Let's find the bath house."

Big Medicine was correct when he said that their noses would guide them. A cloud of vapor was coming from the adobe bath house, and with it the odor that resembled that of decayed eggs.

Inside the place they found a six by nine sunken tub, made from rough boards, with an inlet and outlet made of square wooden pipe. Hashknife lost no time in undressing and getting into the tub. The water was almost too hot for comfort, but he was game to give it a trial.

Sleepy moved just outside the door to get away from the steam, and saw Lucy and Wanna drive up to the stable, where Ike Marsh met them and took charge of the team. They did not look toward the bath house as they crossed the yard and entered the kitchen door.

Hashknife spent about fifteen minutes in the tub, after which he dressed and came outside. The heat of the bath had weakened him, and he looked solemnly at Sleepy.

"If you'd stick a fork in me, you'd sure find me well done," he declared shakily. "There's parts of me that are kinda rare yet, I suppose, but another stewin' like that would sure put me in the fried-egg class."

"Yuh look kinda shriveled up," admitted Sleepy, looking him over closely. "I seen a dead fish that looked like you. I'll betcha you'll start fallin' apart as soon as yuh get into the saddle ag'in, so I'll ride behind yuh and pick up the pieces."

They went back to their horses and started to mount, when Big Medicine came out to them.

"Where are yuh goin?" he asked.

"Back to town," said Hashknife. "Thank yuh very much for the bath."

"You ain't goin' back to no town," declared Big Medicine. He was talking cowtown English now. "Yo're goin' to wrap up in a blanket and take a sleep. How in

—— do yuh expect that hot bath to do yuh any good thataway. Yore pores are all open now, and if yuh catch cold, you'll have pneumonia. C'mon in the house and I'll show yuh a bed."

He turned and stalked inside, leaving no course open to Hashknife and Sleepy, except to follow him. He led them up the creaking stairs and into a bedroom.

"You flop into that bed," he ordered. "When yuh get in, I'll have Wanna bring yuh a hot drink."

He turned to Sleepy.

"Put yore horses in the stable. Ike Marsh is down there and he'll show yuh where to put 'em."

He went back down with Sleepy and they met Lucy and Wanna in the living room. Big Medicine turned to Sleepy.

"I beg your pardon," he said slowly, "but I have never heard your name."

"My name's Stevens," smiled Sleepy. "My friends all call me Sleepy."

"Ah, yes." He turned to the women. "May I present Mr. Stevens? Mr. Stevens, this is my wife, Mrs. Hawkworth, and my daughter, Wanna."

The old squaw held out her hand.

"I like to meet you," she said. "How do?"

"Pleased to meetcha," grinned Sleepy, and held out his hand to Wanna. She shooks hands shyly and moved back.

"His friend is upstairs in bed," said Big Medicine, looking at Wanna. "In about ten minutes, I want you to mix him a hot drink of rum, sugar and water, and take it up to him, Wanna."

The girl nodded quickly and went toward the kitchen. Big Medicine led Sleepy out side and pointed toward the corral, where Ike Marsh was repairing a broken pole.

"Take your horses down there, Mr. Stevens. Ike will show you where to put them."

"Thank yuh," nodded Sleepy, and went to get the animals.

Ike Marsh met him at the stable door and Sleepy told him Big Medicine's orders.

"Yeah, we got room," said Ike, opening the doors.

They put the animals in two vacant stalls and came outside. Sleepy passed his tobacco and papers and they squatted down to smoke.

"I seen you fellers go up to the bath house," said Ike thoughtfully, "and I wondered if you was friends of Big Medicine."

"We dunno yet," smiled Sleepy. "Yuh see, we never seen him before in our lives."

"Yuh didn't?"

Ike inhaled deeply at the wonder of it all.

"Yuh never seen him before, eh? Well, I'll just say that yo're lucky, if yuh needed a hot bath. Big Medicine ain't in the habit of lettin' strangers use his private tub. Yuh see, he's got an idea that somebody might beat him out of the spring."

"Is it worth anythin'?" asked Sleepy.

"——, I dunno." Ike wrinkled his nose. "Not to me, it ain't. I've been here a long time, but she still smells like ——. I suppose she's worth somethin'. I dunno. Goin' to stay long?"

Sleepy told him why they hadn't gone back to town.

"That makes me paw my head," declared Ike. "Mebbe you and yore pardner hypnotized Big Medicine."

"What kind of a feller is he?" asked Sleepy.

"Jist what you've seen. He's two kinds of person, if yuh know what I mean. Sometimes he gits dignified as a undertaker and talks like a book, and the next minute he talks like the rest of us. Who in —— was Shakespeare?"

"I dunno him," admitted Sleepy.

"Me neither. Big Medicine did. ——, yeah! Repeats things that Shakespeare said. I don't *sabe* what it means, but it kinda pleases Big Medicine; so we listen. Oh, he's smart, all right. And if yuh don't think he'll fight, try him."

"I'll take yore word for it," grinned Sleepy. "He throwed a man out just as we rode up."

Ike grunted softly and looked at Sleepy.

"He did?"

"Him, or somebody else in the house," nodded Sleepy. "Anyway, this feller sure came out all spraddled, clawed his way on to his horse and fogged away toward town."

"That was Jim Reed," stated Ike wonderingly. "Wasn't nobody else but Jim Reed. He showed up when me and Big Medicine was talkin', so I came down here to the barn. Well, I'll be darned! Throwed him plumb out, eh?"

"Right on his neck."

"Uh-huh. Well, well! Him and Jim Reed was good friends."

"I'll betcha," grinned Sleepy. "He must 'a' jist loved old Jim."

"It shore has the ear marks of brotherly love," grinned Ike. "I don't like Jim Reed. He's from Greenhorn. Owns some mines, and I reckon he's been tryin' to peddle part of 'em to Big Medicine. How did yore pardner like his bath?"

"All right, I reckon. Big Medicine made him come in and go to bed. He's had rheumatism pretty bad, and we came here to see if the springs would cure it, yuh see. He was almost cured today. Got peeved at a gaudy-lookin' Mexican and throwed him into the slack-tub in the blacksmith shop. Plumb forgot his limp."

"Th'owed a gaudy-lookin' Mex into a slack tub?" wondered Ike. "Had a little mustache, wore his hair long in front of his ears and dressed like a tin-horn gambler?"

"That's the curio," nodded Sleepy. "Wore a red sash instead of a belt."

"Pete Torres, as sure as —— made little apples. Th'owed him into a tub of dirty water! What did Pete do?"

"He —— near drowned When we rode away he was braced ag'in' the forge, drippin' rusty water. I'll tell a man, he wasn't noways gaudy then."

"Aw, gosh, that sounds too good to be true. I'd give half of my life to 'a' seen it done. Now listen: Tell yore pardner to look out for Torres. He's a bad *hombre.* What he don't know about th'owin' a knife ain't to be learned. Why, that son of a gun could pin yore ears to the wall plumb across a room, and he's no slouch with a gun.

"And he's got a pardner named Garcia, half Mex, half Apache. If Torres asked Garcia to kill somebody, Garcia'd do it. He ain't got brains enough to see further than the killin'. It won't be a even break, and yuh can bet on that."

"We're much obliged," said Sleepy sincerely. "Hashknife Hartley don't ask for a even break. That's my pardner's name. Mine's Sleepy Stevens."

"Mine's Ike Marsh."

They shook hands solemnly.

"Pleased to meetcha," said Sleepy.

"Happy t' know yuh," muttered Ike. "You fellers ain't from down in this country, are yuh? Notice yore boots are higher than most punchers wear down here."

"Got these in Miles City, Montana," said Sleepy.

"——, you fellers are shore travelers. Way up there, eh? I've heard about the cow country up thataway. Good riders up there, they tell me. A Oregon puncher was a-tellin' me that the bronc riders are better up there, and the horses bigger, but he said that the Southwest puncher was a better roper. I dunno."

"Mebbe—" Sleepy passed his Durham and papers—"I ain't seen enough punchers in this country to see how they compare. We've got some *hy-iu* cow hands up there, pardner. Where is that Oregon puncher?"

"Works for the K-10 outfit. Name's Sam Blair. I dunno just where he's from, but he talks about Oregon; so I figured he was from there."

"Uh-huh." Sleepy squinted away from the smoke of his cigaret and considered his toes. "What kind of an outfit is this K-10?"

"Cattle. Baldy Kern owns the place. Him and Big Medicine ain't friendly. Yuh see, Big Medicine didn't want another cattle outfit in Hawk Hole; so Baldy kinda sets on the edge. No, they ain't never had no open trouble, but Baldy knows where to head in at."

"Hawkworth been here a long time, ain't he?"

"——, yes. Must 'a' come here twenty-five years ago. Took up a homestead, I reckon. Then he got other men to take up homesteads and turn 'em over to him. Bimeby he's got most of Hawk Hole. Then he bought the rest from the Government for about two-bits per acre.

"I dunno what in —— he wants it for. There's just him and Lucy and Wanna. Big Medicine ain't never been out of here since he came. Money don't mean nothin' to him. Once in a while we herds some cattle out to Caliente, sells 'em to a buyer and Big Medicine shoves the money in his sock. Me and Musical and Cleve takes 'em out and brings back the money."

"Kind of a funny way to live,"observed Sleepy. "His money don't do him much good. "That half-breed girl is kinda pretty."

Ike ground his cigaret under his heel and got to his feet.

"She's a real nice girl," he said slowly, "and nobody ain't allowed to think any other way around here, Stevens."

"I didn't say nothin' wrong, did I?" asked Sleepy.

"No yuh didn't. I don't think yuh had any idea of sayin' anythin' wrong, but I just wanted yuh to know how things lay."

"Suits me," smiled Sleepy. "Where I come from we ain't in the habit of sayin' anythin' against any girl, Marsh."

Ike considered it gravely and nodded.

"That's a good country, Stevens. Let's go up to the house."

PEDRO TORRES was in a bad frame of mind over his enforced bath in the blacksmith shop. He made a few purchases at one of the stores, bought a bath in the one tub at the hotel, and became presentable again.

But his vanity had been badly injured, and he swore dire threats toward the man who had insulted him. He assured himself that he had done nothing wrong, merely desiring to talk with a half-breed girl.

Garcia was not sympathetic. He had not seen the incident, and the fact that Torres hankered for revenge made little difference to Garcia. If Torres had asked Garcia to kill Hashknife, Garcia would have instantly agreed to do it.

Baldy Kern smiled grimly and polished his head. He was curious to know a few things about Hashknife and Sleepy. Baldy was not talkative, so he chose to listen. Cloudy Day, still full of liquor, had been told of the incident, and imagined that he had seen it.

"It sure was good," he announced in the Greenback saloon. "That tall puncher was all crippled up with rheumatism, but he picked Torres up, just like Torres wasn't nothin'. If that feller's got rheumatism, I'm paralyzed, thassall."

Baldy grinned widely. He had seen no evidences of Hashknife being a cripple.

"Who is this feller, Cloudy?" he asked.

"Tha's a question," said Cloudy owlishly. "Lon introduced me to them, but I didn't git the names."

"Lon knows 'em does he?"

"Oh, abs'lutely. Why, Lon's old friend of theirs."

Baldy accepted this with a grain of salt. He knew that Cloudy was prone to exaggerate, especially when drinking; so he found Lon Pelly in the Yellow Stamp saloon, bought Lon a drink and swung the conversation around to the baptism of Torres.

Lon hadn't seen it either.

"Must be strong," commented Baldy. "Torres ain't no little kid. They tell me that this stranger picked Torres up and packed him to the blacksmith shop."

"He's tall, but don't look very strong," said Lon. "I dunno anythin' about him, except what I got from talkin' with him a little. They was on the stage when it was held up. The tall one said they was goin' over to Hawkworth's for him to take baths for his rheumatism."

"Must be badly crippled," mused Baldy aloud.

"He did limp a little," offered Lon. "Mebbe he got so mad at Torres that he forgot to limp. A feller over in the restaurant seen it, and he said that Torres was bowin' and scrapin' to Wanna Hawkworth, when this tall feller picked him up."

Baldy smiled softly and bought another drink. Did Lon know what this tall feller's name was?

"Name's Hartley. Short one is Stevens."

Baldy considered the names, but they meant nothing to him.

"How much of a haul did the robbers get?" he asked.

"Nobody seems to know," replied Lon.

"Got any idea who done it, Lon?"

"Yeah—three men."

Baldy left the Yellow Stamp and went down to the doctor's house. He had known Doctor Henry for several months. The doctor was an oldish man, very methodical, reserved.

"The patient is doing very nicely," he told Baldy. "I recovered the bullet, and can see no reason why, with proper care, he should not completely recover."

"That's fine," agreed Baldy. "Yo're some doctor. What was the feller's name, Doc?"

"His name is Jack Hill, I believe."

"Uh-huh. Jack Hill. Must be a stranger, eh?"

"I think he is, Mr. Kern. He is not inclined to talk about himself. My worry now is to get a suitable nurse for him. He says he is able to pay for services, and wants to be sent out, but such a thing would be impossible."

"I dunno where you'd find a nurse, Doc. Wimmin ain't noways plentiful around here, not the nursin' kind."

Baldy went back to the Greenback saloon, none the wiser for his interviews. He did not know any one by the name of Jack Hill, and he wondered why the holdup man had shot him down. For his own satisfaction, Baldy desired to know things.

It was shortly after dark that Torres and

Garcia mounted their horses and rode out of Pinnacle, heading south. Across the border was the Rancho Sierra, owned by Steve Guadalupe, who bred game cocks and trouble. Steve was an old man and full of iniquity, who pointed with pride to the fact that his ancestors were pure Castillian, when, as a matter of fact, he was a mixture of Portuguese, Mexican and Yaqui.

Torres and Garcia were friends of Steve, as were most of the denizens of the border, whose deviltry served to bring dishonor upon the Mexicans as a people. The Rancho Sierra was too isolated for the Mexican government to bother with Steve's doings, and the United States officers could only patrol the border and hate him from afar.

Two more of Baldy's men, Sam Blair and Jack Baum, had ridden into town just before Torres and Garcia rode away. Blair was a blocky-faced individual, none too intelligent looking and of rather unkempt appearance.

Baldy met him at the hitch rack and whispered for him to follow Torres and see where he was going. Blair nodded and rode out of town a few minutes after Torres and Garcia. Blair did not ask questions; neither did Baldy tell him why he wanted Torres followed.

IT WAS one of those moonlight nights down in the border country, when the moon seems to almost rest upon the hills and bathes the world in a blue light. Blair had no difficulty in following Torres and Garcia. They rode slowly toward the south until a mile out of town, when they turned northeast, circling back around Pinnacle.

Blair waited until they had made their swing before following them. He rode a gray horse, which made him almost invisible in the gray blue of the landscape. Torres and Garcia rode faster now, keeping off the road and heading straight for Hawkworth's Tumbling H ranch. Blair suspected that this was their goal, so he moved closer.

They swung wide of the ranch buildings and came in behind the stable, while Blair dismounted farther up the cañon and came down on foot. Two of the ranch house buildings were illuminated, and he could hear a squeaky phonograph playing a waltz.

Blair came in behind the stable, going softly. He knew that Torres and Garcia were not far away. He crawled through the corral fence, went slowly along the side of the stable and out through the other side of the corral.

There was still no sign of Torres and Garcia. Blair peered around the corner of the stable. He could see the door of the bath house, which was illuminated from a light within. From the ranch house came the sound of muffled voices.

Blair scratched his nose and considered things. If some one came from the rear door of the ranch house, they could see him. He did not like his position in the matter at all. Some one was moving around in the bath house, and now the occupant came out, carrying a lantern, which gave little light.

Blair flattened himself against the wall, between the corner of the barn and the corral, peering around to see which way the lantern bearer was going.

Then there came a dull thud, and the man with the lantern went down, throwing the lantern aside, but not extinguishing it. Blair jerked back. Torres and Garcia ran past him, going around the corner of the corral and out to their horses.

In another minute he heard them riding swiftly away. The phonograph had started another tune. Blair squinted thoughtfully, as he peered out again. He could see the black bulk of the man on the ground, and the spluttering lantern near him.

Cautiously Blair stepped away from the corner and went swiftly over to the man, who was lying on his back. He picked up the lantern and stepped in close, throwing the beams of light into the face of the man on the ground.

For several moments Blair stared down at that face, oblivious to everything. He bent closer, holding the lantern on a level with his own face, as he peered into the features of the injured man. A voice spoke to him out of the darkness and he jerked upright., still clutching the lantern.

IT WAS late that evening when Musical Matthews and Cleve Davis rode in at the Tumbling H and met Hashknife and Sleepy. In a few short words Big Medicine told them that Hashknife and Sleepy would be with them until Hashknife's rheumatism had succumbed to the effects of the hot baths.

Hashknife had just got out of bed and was feeling better, but slightly weak. Lucy had told about Hashknife's encounter with

Torres, and it seemed to please every one except Hashknife. Big Medicine seemed a bit dubious over the outcome of it.

"Watch that Mexican," he warned Hashknife. "He's a snake. "

"I've made snakes bite themselves," grinned Hashknife.

"Didja ever see one of them knife-throwin' Mex handle his weapon?" asked Musical.

"No," Hashknife shook his head. "I don't *sabe* 'em much."

"Then look out for 'em. Knives don't make no noise. I'd shore rather face a six-gun than a knife, and either Torres or his dirty-faced pardner, Garcia, can shore pin your ears back with a knife at twenty feet."

Lucy came to announce supper, and they all clattered to the table, except Hashknife.

"I've done lost my appetite," he told them. "Couldn't eat a thing, folks; so I reckon I'll take the lantern and go out to the bath house. Another good soakin' and a big sleep will put me into the saddle again."

Lucy secured the lantern for him and he went out through the kitchen, while the rest of them did ample justice to the culinary efforts of Lucy and Wanna, who waited on the table silently.

"We rode beyond the breaks," Musical told Big Medicine. "As far as we can see, everythin' is all right. There wasn't many cows over on that side. From up on that saw-tooth ridge yuh can almost see the Rancho Sierra."

Big Medicine nodded and turned to Sleepy.

"This Rancho Sierra is across the border. Belongs to old Steve Guadalupe, the meanest old Mexican that ever stole a cow. We have to keep our eyes open all the time, Stevens. They've raided us a few times."

"Yuh can't get 'em back after they cross the line, eh?"

"Not very well. Our business is to keep them far enough on this side to make it hard for them to grab very many. Guadalupe has a tough gang down there, rustlers, smugglers and all that kind of folks."

"I wonder if it was some of his gang that held us up the other night," said Sleepy.

Big Medicine frowned heavily, but said nothing.

"——, yuh don't have to go into Mexico to find holdup men," said Cleve Davis. "There's plenty of 'em on this side of the line. I've got a hunch that it was white men from this side of the line that stole the last bunch of cattle from us."

"That K-10 outfit—" began Musical, but Big Medicine stopped him with a gesture.

"Name no names, Musical, please," he said softly. "There is bad blood between this ranch and the K-10, and the least said the better. Give them the benefit of the doubt, until we are sure."

"All right, Big Medicine. I s'pose that's right, too. But I get kinda mad once in a while."

"You should learn to control your temper."

Sleepy grinned, as he remembered how Big Medicine had pitched Jim Reed out on his head that morning. Big Medicine had said nothing about being mad, but had admitted that Reed had irritated him beyond endurance. Sleepy wondered what Big Medicine might do if he became mad.

They finished their meal and went back to the creaky-floored living room, where Musical proceeded to put a record on the phonograph. After the second record Sleepy grew nervous. He hitched his chair around, tore up two cigaret papers, and decided he would go and see how Hashknife was getting on with his bath.

He went out through the kitchen, where Lucy and Wanna were clearing off the table, and the old squaw handed him a clean towel.

"I ain't goin' to take a bath," he told her smiling.

"All right. You giveum to tall man. He need much towel."

"There is quite a lot of him," grinned Sleepy. "Thanks."

The door was not latched and he stepped out softly. The bath house was only fifty feet away. About ten feet from the open door of the bath house crouched a man, holding a lantern in such a way that his face was fully illuminated. Lying on the ground was the body of a man.

Sleepy stepped forward, his right hand reaching back to his gun.

"What are you doin' here?" he almost shouted.

Sam Blair jerked up, still holding the lantern, but flung it aside, as he drew his gun. The lantern had barely smashed to the ground, when the two men began shooting.

Sleepy felt the first bullet as it passed his

head, and fired twice in rapid succession. Blair fired again, but the streak of flame from his gun was pointing upward and the bullet went streaking toward the North Star, while Blair stumbled and went down in a heap.

It was all over in five seconds. The kitchen door crashed open and the three cowpunchers, headed by Big Medicine, came running out. Sleepy was going toward Blair, covering him with his gun, when Big Medicine joined him.

"What happened?" he panted. "What was the matter."

"Watch that jigger," said Sleepy hoarsely. "I think he's got Hashknife."

Sleepy fell on his knees beside Hashknife, while the others scratched matches. Big Medicine came from Blair.

"Take him into the house," he ordered. "This other feller ain't goin' to get away, until he's carried away."

They carried Hashknife in the house and placed him on the floor, while Big Medicine made a swift examination.

"He got hit, that's all," declared Big Medicine, pointing to an egg-like swelling on Hashknife's head between his eye and ear. "He'll be all right in a few minutes, I think."

Sleepy sighed with relief and leaned against the wall.

"That other jigger opened the ball," he said wearily. "His first bullet almost creased me. He was humped over Hashknife, lookin' him over with a lantern, when I went out there. I just had a hunch that somethin' was wrong."

Big Medicine nodded slowly.

"It was Sam Blair of the K-10 outfit," he said softly.

"Dead?" asked Musical.

"Yes."

Musical shrugged his shoulders.

"The war is on, I reckon."

"Aw, that's too bad," said Sleepy. "Dang it, I had to shoot."

"Sure yuh did," assured Musical. "That's all right, Stevens."

THE practical Lucy came in with a basin of water and a towel, with which she proceeded to bathe Hashknife's head and face. He opened his eyes and stared up at them in wonderment.

"How are yuh feelin', pardner?" asked Sleepy.

Hashknife sat up and felt gingerly of his head.

"What happened?" he asked foolishly.

"Somebody hit yuh when yuh came out of the bath house."

"Oh, yeah." Hashknife got to his feet and blinked painfully. "I remember startin' out, when somethin' hit me and I seen a million stars. Who was it, Sleepy?"

"I dunno."

Sleepy scratched his head nervously, as he told Hashknife what he had done.

"They tell me that his name was Sam Blair," said Sleepy.

"From the K-10 outfit," said Musical quickly. "Mebbe we better kinda look around with a lantern, eh?"

Hashknife and Sleepy exchanged a quick glance.

"You feel good now?" asked Lucy anxiously, dripping water from the towel and the basin.

"Yeah, I feel fine," lied Hashknife. "Ain't got a pain in either leg."

The boys had secured another lantern and were going out to look around. Hashknife sat down in a chair and Lucy proceeded to attack the swelling with compresses. In a few minutes Musical came back and placed a long-bladed knife, with a horn handle, on the table beside Hashknife.

"There's what hit yuh," he declared. "Whoever throwed it at yuh must 'a' misjudged a little and hit yuh with the hilt. It was right near where yuh was layin'. And," added Musical, "that Sam Blair wasn't no knife thrower."

"Wasn't he?"

Hashknife looked the knife over carefully. It was a wicked weapon, almost as sharp as a razor, and with a point like a needle.

'Do yuh reckon the Mexican did it?" asked Hashknife.

"You'll probably never know who done it," said Ike. "Sam Blair is too dead to skin. Mebbe he knowed who threw it. If he didn't, what in —— was he doin' out there. Big Medicine swore he'd kill the first K-10 puncher that showed up; swore that to Baldy Kern.

"It's shore too bad, but it can't be helped. The K-10 will declare war as sure as ——. Not that we care a whoop what they do, except that it'll mean a killin'."

Ike turned to Sleepy.

"That Sam Blair is the puncher I was

tellin' yuh about, from Oregon, or up thataway. Funny, ain't it? Talkin' about him today, and got him on our hands tonight—dead."

Big Medicine came in and sat down. His face was very grave, as he rested his big hands on his knees and squinted thoughtfully. Ike handed him the knife and he hefted it in his hand.

"I don't think that Blair ever threw it," he said. "It looks like one that Pete Torres might use."

"If Blair had nothun' to do with it, why did he start shootin' at Stevens?" asked Musical.

"I don't know, Musical."

Big Medicine handed back the knife.

"This will start trouble, won't it?" asked Hashknife.

"Very likely," said Big Medicine. "The K-10 outfit is not a crew of men you can talk things over with."

"I'll tell yuh what we'll do," suggested Hashknife. "We'll pack the body in close to Pinnacle and swear that we met him and he started shootin'. That'll let you folks out of it."

"That's it," agreed Sleepy. "They'll believe us."

But Big Medicine shook his head quickly.

"Since when did the Tumbling H shift a responsibility to a guest?" he demanded. "If Baldy Kern wants battle, he'll get it."

"Suits me," said Musical joyfully. "I've been kinda——"

"Just a moment," begged Hashknife. "We're not askin' to take any responsibility off the Tumblin' H ranch. There's somethin' wrong about this whole thing, folks. If Torres threw that knife, what did Blair have to do with it? Torres ain't connected with the K-10, is he?"

"No, he sure ain't," declared Ike.

"Find Blair's horse," said Hashknife. "He didn't walk here."

Musical, Cleve, Ike and Sleepy went horse hunting, while Big Medicine watched Lucy draw most of the swelling from Hashknife's injury. The hilt of the knife had bruised the scalp a little, but it would not be noticeable, after the swelling was out.

"Torres probably threw that knife, saw you fall and headed for the border," said Big Medicine. "It isn't often that he misses. Possibly he hurried his throw and misjudged the distance in the dark."

"Always somethin' to be thankful for," grinned Hashknife. "It always seems that things might 'a' been worse."

In a few minutes the boys came in. They had found Blair's gray horse, branded with the K-10, and brought it up to the house.

"What's the next thing to do?" asked Ike.

"We'll put Blair on his horse and take him to town," said Hashknife. "Me and Sleepy found him beside the road, when we were comin' in from this ranch, and we don't know a thing about how he got killed. There's somethin' wrong about this deal, and if we make a mystery about this, mebbe somebody will show their cards."

Big Medicine nodded gravely.

"Possibly. I wish we could settle this without open warfare, but I do not want you to take the blame. Blair had no right to be here tonight. He knew that I had drawn a dead-line against the K-10, and he knew that I would keep my word."

They loaded Blair's body on his horse, roped it on with Blair's rope, and saddled their own horses. Hashknife walked with only a slight limp and was able to mount his horse without much suffering. His head ached slightly, but otherwise he felt able to take care of himself.

"Come out tomorrow mornin'," invited Big Medicine.

"Come tonight," said Lucy. "We got plenty bed."

"Thank yuh," grinned Hashknife. "We'll see how this deal will work out. So long."

THEY rode away from the ranch over the road which led to Pinnacle, while the lights from the open door of the Tumbling H faded in the distance.

"So Sam Blair was the puncher from Oregon, eh?" said Hashknife.

"Kinda looks like it," agreed Sleepy. "He had that lantern up close to his head and I knowed him right away. I'll betcha he recognized you, Hashknife."

"He sure would."

Hashknife squinted ahead, as he visualized the day that he and Sleepy had busted up a little gang in the Idaho hills, a gang of four horse thieves. Sam Blair had been the sole survivor. They turned him over to the sheriff, and he had later wounded a deputy sheriff and made his escape.

"Mebbe it's a good thing he's passed on," observed Hashknife. "Blair could do us a

lot of harm, if he's connected with a bad outfit down here. We'll just set tight and see which way things jump. Either Blair tried to kill me with a knife, or he was connected with Torres. I don't think Blair done it. He got a good look at me, and when you showed up he got panicky and started throwin' lead. But what was he there for?"

"Don't ask me," replied Sleepy. "I ain't no use when it comes to thinkin' things out. Where did we find Blair?"

"Right here."

The road turned sharply around the point of a hill with brush on each side. Hashknife dismounted and kicked around in the brush, digging his heels into the dirt and otherwise making it appear as though the body had been found there. Sleepy forced the horses to turn several times in the road.

Then, as sort of an afterthought, Hashknife drew the long knife from inside his shirt bosom and tossed it near the spot.

"Somebody'll recognize that knife, Sleepy," he said as he mounted. "We'll give 'em somethin' to quarrel about."

They rode into town and up to the front of the Greenback saloon, where they dismounted and tied their horses. Lon Pelly was in a poker game, sitting across the table from Baldy Kern. Cloudy Day leaned against the bar, talking with two of the men from the K-10. The other games were fairly well patronized, and the two-piece orchestra was dispensing music to three couples of dancers.

Hashknife went to the poker game and spoke directly to Lon Pelly.

"You better step out here a minute, Sheriff," he said. "I've got a dead man."

"You've got a what?" blurted the sheriff, half-rising.

"Dead man," repeated Hashknife. "Found him beside the road between here and the Tumbling H."

"F'r gosh sakes!"

Lon Pelly upset his pile of poker chips, in getting to his feet. The table was deserted in a moment, as all the players wanted to see who the corpse might be. They filed outside and helped Sleepy untie the body and take it in to the saloon.

Baldy Kern swore softly as he looked at Blair's body. There was little doubt in his mind that Torres or Garcia had killed Blair.

"Where did yuh find him?" asked the sheriff.

"About a mile from here, out toward the Tumblin' H," said Hashknife. "He was lyin' near the road, and his horse had kinda got tangled in the brush. Do yuh know who he is?"

"Sam Blair," said Baldy. "Worked for me."

The crowd ringed the body, while the sheriff made his examination.

"Knife or gun?" queried Baldy.

"Gun—twice," said the sheriff. "Good shootin'."

He opened the dead man's shirt and covered the two wounds with the palm of his hand.

"Wasn't no nervous finger on that trigger, gents. Sam Blair never knowed what hit him."

"Didja find his gun?" asked Baldy, examining the empty holster.

"Never looked," replied Hashknife. "Probably there in the dirt."

"We'll take a look in the mornin'," said the sheriff. "Some of you boys take the body down to the doctor's place, will yuh? I'm right in a big jack-pot. Anyway, there ain't nothin' I can do."

Several of the men carried Blair's body down to the doctor's house, so Hashknife and Sleepy went along.

The doctor was properly indignant, and told them in plain language that he was not running a morgue, so they trooped back uptown with the body.

The doctor recognized Hashknife and Sleepy as being two of the men who had brought in the wounded stranger, and spoke to them about him, asking if they knew where he could get a nurse.

"You might get Mrs. Hawkworth," said Hashknife. "She sure is a good nurse."

"The Indian woman? Hm-m-m. I wonder if she would take the case. This man is out of danger, but needs a nurse badly. I can't be here all the time, and I hate to leave him to the mercies of some man who knows nothing about nursing."

"How long before he'll be able to navigate?" asked Hashknife.

"Two weeks at least."

"Well, I dunno about the Indian woman," said Hashknife. "I'll ask her."

"You'd be doing me a big favor," said the doctor. "I've got to get someone pretty soon."

They went back to the Greenback and found that the body had been deposited in a vacant store room for the present. There was much speculation over who killed Blair, but Baldy Kern said nothing. He felt sure that Torres and Garcia had killed him. Jack Baum, who had been Blair's bunkie, knew that Blair had ridden out to see where Torres went, and he also believed that Torres or Garcia had killed him.

The sheriff was too interested in the poker game to speculate on who might have killed Blair. Hashknife and Sleepy stood at the bar, listening to the buzz of conversation.

Lee Yung, the big Chinaman, was at the bar, sipping a drink, his inscrutable eyes taking in the activity of the place.

A little later the sheriff dropped out of the game and came to the bar. He had fared badly, and was not in good humor.

"Got three full-houses beat, hand-runnin'," he complained. "When they do that to yuh, it's time to quit."

"Before that, if possible," said Lee Yung in perfect English.

"That's right," laughed the sheriff. "Saves money, if you've got sense enough to see it."

The stage line owner came into the saloon, saw the sheriff and came to him

"I just got word from Caliente," he explained hurriedly. "They couldn't tell just how much of a haul the robbers got off the stage, but there was a valuable package for Hawkworth in the treasure box. I think Hawkworth's package was valued at five hundred dollars."

"For Big Medicine, eh?" mused the sheriff.

Hashknife and Sleepy had heard what was said, as had Lee Yung. The sheriff turned to Hashknife.

"When will you see Hawkworth again?" he asked.

"Tomorrow mornin', I reckon."

"All right. You tell him about that package, will yuh?"

"Sure thing."

THE agent went out and the sheriff went hunting for another chance to lose his money. He was an inveterate gambler. Lee Yung finished his drink and crossed to the roulette game, while Hashknife and Sleepy went to the hotel, engaged a room, and put their horses in the hotel stable.

"Well," said Sleepy, "we got away with it, cowboy. They never even questioned us closely."

"That's true," agreed Haskhnife. "I wish I knew who Kern suspects. He kept his mouth shut tight, 'cause he thinks he's got the deadwood on somebody. And there was a valuable package on that stage for Big Medicine, valued at five hundred dollars."

"We're here to cure yore rheumatism," reminded Sleepy.

"——, I'm cured," grinned Hashknife.

"Then we might as well roll our little ball of yarn out of here, eh?"

Hashknife squinted thoughtfully at the little oil lamp in their room, as he painfully bent his knee in removing a boot.

"Well," he said slowly, "I ain't exactly cured, Sleepy, but I'm recoverin'. That hot water sure is great medicine."

"Between that and a pretty girl to bring yuh hot whisky."

Hashknife grinned widely.

"Y'betcha. I'd hate to be cured too quick. I noticed her smilin' at you, Sleepy."

"Yuh did not," indignantly.

"I did too. I asked her if she liked yuh, and she says, '*Kiwa teahwit.*' "

"What does that mean?"

"I dunno," said Hashknife innocently. "There's a lot of that language I don't *sabe* myself. Anyway she smiled at yuh, so it must be all right."

"I s'pose," agreed Sleepy. "They're real nice folks at that ranch."

He walked to the window of their room, which was on the ground floor, and looked out. The night stage was just leaving, after waiting for the delayed mail from the Greenhorn mines, and in the light from the hotel office, Sleepy was able to get a fairly clear view of the equipage.

He watched it disappear and turned to Hashknife, who was already in bed.

"The stage just left, and that big Chinaman was on the seat with the driver," he said.

Hashknife rubbed his nose on the edge of the blanket and grinned at Sleepy.

"Didja want him for anythin'?"

"Not that anybody knows about," retorted Sleepy. "I jist said that he went away on the stage. If you'd 'a' told me that I'd be supposed to marvel to beat —— and lose sleep over it, wouldn't I?"

Hashknife nodded thoughtfully.

"Thank yuh, Mr. Stevens. I sure do appreciate yore information. C'mon to bed, you limber-jawed saddle-slicker. Just because yuh saved my life tonight don't give yuh no license to get sarcastic with me."

"I never saved yore life," declared Sleepy. "Sam Blair wasn't tryin' to kill yuh. He was jist lookin' at yuh. I saved my own life, if anybody rises up to inquire."

"Well, don't brag about it, Sleepy. If yuh ever do anythin' real big, I'd like to hear about it, but don't bother me with little incidents. Blow out that lamp, if yuh ain't run out of wind, and c'mon to bed."

EARLY the following morning Ike Marsh rode into Pinnacle. He was too anxious to wait for the news, so came in to get it first hand. Guarded inquiries revealed the fact that Hashknife and Sleepy were at the hotel, and a short conversation with one of the swampers at the Greenback saloon informed him that the body of Sam Blair was in a vacant storeroom.

Then Baldy Kern and Jack Baum rode in and tied their horses at the Greenback rack. Ike, being discreet, went out the back door and came around to the front just in time to meet the sheriff.

"Howdy, Lon," he said, wondering just how much the sheriff knew.

"Hello, Ike," returned the sheriff. "What do yuh know?"

Ike shook his head. That was the trouble; he wanted to know something. The sheriff squinted at the horses at the rack.

"Baldy Kern rode in early," he observed. "I reckon he wants to see where Sam Blair was shot. Yuh heard about it, didn't yuh?"

Ike spat dryly and shook his head. The sheriff told him about Hashknife and Sleepy finding Blair's body beside the road, and Ike marveled greatly.

"Who done it do yuh suppose?" he asked.

"Gosh only knows, Ike. Somebody sure shot straight. Here comes Hartley and his pardner."

Hashknife and Sleepy were coming from the hotel, heading for the restaurant. Ike and the sheriff met them, just as Baldy and Baum came from the saloon. Baldy scowled at Ike and got one in return, while Hashknife shook hands all around.

"I'd kinda like to see where yuh found Sam Blair," said Baldy.

"Right away," agreed Hashknife. "Me and Sleepy was goin' to start for the Tumblin' H; so we'll all ride out to the spot."

It did not take them long to ride to where Hashknife and Sleepy had planted the signs of conflict, and Baldy was the one to find the knife. He looked it over carefully and handed it to the sheriff.

"Some toad-sticker," admitted the sheriff, testing the point with his thumb, as he scrutinized the ground carefully.

Baldy and Jack Baum exchanged knowing glances. That Torres had killed Sam Blair was a certainty now. They had seen Torres with that knife.

But search as they might, they could not find Blair's gun.

"——, the murderer took it," declared Baum. "He lost his knife, but took the gun. We'll get him, y"betcha."

Satisfied that they could find nothing more, Baldy, Baum and the sheriff rode back toward town, while Hashknife, Sleepy and Ike went on to the Tumbling H, where Big Medicine sat on the rickety porch and waited for the news.

Ike told him the whole story before Hashknife had a chance to explain anything.

"They even throwed that knife away where Baldy could find it," declared Ike. "By golly, they sure drawed the wool over Lon Pelly's eyes, too. I seen Baldy look at Jack Baum when Baldy found that knife, and I'll betcha they *know* who killed Blair."

Big Medicine nodded approvingly.

"Thank you, boys. It will save a lot of trouble. Come in and eat breakfast."

"That's right," grinned Sleepy. "We didn't take time to eat in town."

Big Medicine explained things to Lucy and Wanna, and the old squaw grinned delightedly, as she examined Hashknife's wound of the night before.

"All gone," she declared.

"Yo're some doctor," smiled Hashknife, patting her on the shoulder.

He turned to Big Medicine, who was sitting down at the table.

"Hawkworth, I had a talk with the doctor last night about that young feller who got shot the night we came in. The doctor can't get anybody to nurse this feller, to look after him while the doctor is out on his cases.

"He's kinda up against it, don'tcha know

it. I suggested that he get yore wife to nurse this sick man. She sure could do a good job of it, and I feel sorry for the doc."

Big Medicine stared at Hashknife and looked at Lucy.

"No," he said gruffly. "Lucy don't need a job."

"It ain't that," assured Hashknife. "The doc knows that she don't need the money."

But Big Medicine shook his head.

"No, I need her here, Hartley."

"Well, all right," said Hashknife. "I just mentioned it."

Big Medicine said little during the meal. He seemed doubly thoughtful, and his eyes were often turned toward Hashknife, as if wondering why Hashknife should concern himself with this stranger.

From the living-room came the squeaky strains of the "Holy City." Musical Matthews, the last to arise, was having his "morning's morning," as usual. No one commented on it, as they were all used to it by this time.

Sleepy looked up from his breakfast and caught Wanna's eye. She smiled at him and he dropped an egg off his knife on to his lap. Hashknife saw the egg fall and gave Sleepy a reproachful look. Wanna giggled and turned back to the stove.

"Mrs. Hawkworth, if you've got a rough knife, I wish you'd give it to Sleepy," said Hashknife. "The one he's got is too slick."

"I look," said Lucy seriously, and Ike went into a paroxysm of mirth.

He had seen Sleepy trying to rescue the egg, which managed to elude him. Wanna entered into the spirit of the thing and presented Sleepy with a pancake turner.

Sleepy thanked her, upset his coffee with a careless elbow and withdrew from the room, thankful to escape. Big Medicine looked reprovingly at Wanna, but did not know exactly what it was about, while Lucy still searched for a rough-bladed knife.

AFTER breakfast Big Medicine drew Hashknife aside. They walked down by the corral and stopped in the shade of the stable

"I heard last night that there was a package, valued at five hundred dollars and consigned to you on that stage the other night," said Hashknife. "It was among the stolen stuff, according to the manager of the stage office at Pinnacle."

If Hashknife expected Big Medicine to show surprize, he was disappointed. The big man seemed not at all interested in the news.

"I was just wondering," he said slowly, "why you suggested that my wife act as nurse for Doctor Henry."

"Well, I dunno," said Hashknife. "Mebbe it was 'cause she was the only woman I knew in this country, and because she knows how to take care of folks."

"I see," Big Medicine nodded slowly. "I'm sorry, but such a thing is impossible, Hartley. I couldn't get along without her."

"How about bringin' the sick man out here?"

"No, I couldn't think of such a thing."

Hashknife squatted on his heels and began rolling a cigaret. Ike and Cleve came down past them, going to the stable, and Big Medicine told them to take things easy until he decided what he wanted them to do today.

"Hawkworth," said Hashknife, after the boys had gone, "there's somethin' wrong around this country."

Big Medicine looked at Hashknife, but did not reply.

"You lost five hundred dollars in that holdup," continued Hashknife, "and a man was shot without visible cause. Last night some one tried to kill me with a knife. Sleepy killed a man who was lookin' me over, and his own friends didn't ask many questions. What's it all about?"

Big Medicine leaned back against the barn and looked off across the hills.

"I don't know," he said softly. "Maybe there is something wrong." He turned to Hashknife. "Are you a detective?"

Hashknife smiled and shook his head.

"Not guilty, Hawkworth."

"Then why are you interested?"

"Curiosity, I reckon. And you've got to figure that I was in that holdup, and that I got hit last night. Ain't that enough to make me interested?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"All right. Will yuh do me a big favor, Hawkworth?"

"I don't know."

"Have 'em bring that stranger out here to the ranch. It'll only be a matter of two weeks, at the most."

Big Medicine frowned heavily.

"Just why do you want him here, Hartley?"

"I just want to play my hunch. Do you know what a hunch is?"

"Yes. But where does he come in?"

"They shot him, Hawkworth. He had his hands in the air when they shot him."

"M-m-m. You think he knows——"

"Holdup men don't make a practise of shootin' strangers."

"No, I suppose not. But will you be able to find out anything from him?"

"I'm not goin' to ask him questions. As far as he's concerned, he'll be just a sick man. What do yuh say?"

Big Medicine thought it over for a full minute. Then:

"I'll have Ike and Cleve hitch up the wagon team, Hartley. I think Lucy can fix up a room for him."

Big Medicine went striding over to the house, while Hashknife grinned and rolled a cigaret.

Musical Matthews was busy at the phonograph, so Sleepy left him and went to the kitchen door, where Wanna and Lucy were washing the breakfast dishes. Big Medicine came in and stopped near the middle of the room.

"I'm goin' to send Ike and Cleve to Pinnacle with the wagon," he told Lucy. "They'll bring that young feller out here to stay a while, the one that got shot. Can you take care of him?"

Lucy thought it over for a moment.

"I fix room," she said simply, and turned back to her work.

Big Medicine walked past Sleepy and went into the living-room. Wanna went outside, carrying some chicken feed, and Sleepy stepped into the kitchen.

"I just wanted to ask yuh a question," he told Lucy softly. "What does '*kiwa teahwit*' mean?"

"*Kiwa teahwit?*" repeated Lucy thoughtfully. "I forget some word. Mm-m-m."

She looked up and smiled.

"That mean crooked leg. Jus' like bow leg, I think."

Sleepy flushed slightly and his lips compressed a trifle.

"Does Wanna *sabe* that language?" he asked.

Lucy shook her head.

"Wanna never hear. Long times I no hear."

"Thank yuh," nodded Sleepy, and went outside.

Ike and Cleve were hitching a team to the wagon. Big Medicine and Musical came out of the front door and walked down where Hashknife squatted in the shade of the stable.

Ike and Cleve drove away, and Sleepy went down to join those at the stable.

"What do yuh know about Lee Yung the Chinaman?" asked Hashknife.

"Not much," replied Musical. "He's a plunger, I *sabe* that much. Yuh can't tell anythin' about a chink but I'd bet my last cent that Lee Yung is a smuggler. I tell yuh there's chinks bein' run through this country, and drugs. Lee Yung ain't the kind that would waste his time over what he can win in Pinnacle."

"He went out on the stage last night," offered Sleepy.

"Thasso? Well, if I was a officer I'd watch that chink."

"Talks good English," said Hashknife.

"And thinks like an Oriental, I suppose," smiled Big Medicine. "It is a dangerous combination. I have never met Lee Yung. I feel morally responsible for Hawk Hole, and I hope that Musical is wrong about the drug smuggling. As far as the smuggling of Chinese is concerned, I have nothing to say.

"They are not a menace as far as I can understand. Our Government admits many emigrants less desirable than Chinese. Except in rare cases, the Chinese are a peaceable race, and their troubles are only their own people. Unlike the whites, they are a bit particular whom they kill."

"That's right," grinned Hashknife. "They seem to draw the color line. I've never seen one that would lie. They either tell yuh the truth, or tell yuh nothin'."

"I wish more white men were thataway," said Sleepy, looking seriously at Hashknife. "A lot of fellers' brains and tongues are *kiwa teahwit.*"

Hashknife squinted closely at Sleepy, and his face broke into a wide grin. Big Medicine was not looking at either of them.

"Lucy got a lot of pleasure out of exchanging a few words in the trade language with you," he said. "She said it was like seeing some of her own people again. None of the rest of us ever understood the language."

"That's what I understand," said Sleepy, and Hashknife smothered a laugh in the sleeve of his shirt.

The joke had gone over better than he had anticipated, much better.

IT WAS about a week later, well past midnight, when the stage rattled down the grades which led into Hawk Hole. Olsen, the regular driver, was alone on the seat, with one passenger inside the stage.

They swept into the Hole and out on to the flat country, the four horses running at top speed. Far ahead of them a lantern blinked beside the road. Olsen drew the team down to a trot and stopped near the lantern, where a man held the heads of a team hitched to a buckboard.

The man climbed down from inside the stage and walked over to the lantern. He was a big man, almost as big as Big Medicine Hawkworth, and of about the same age. But this man's face was pale and heavily lined, with a hawk-like nose and piercing, black eyes. His white mustache was waxed to needle-like points, and his white hair curled down around his shoulders from beneath a wide-brimmed, black hat.

"Well, yuh got here, Doc," observed Baldy Kern, who held the team. "I just got here myself."

"That wild —— of a driver swore he'd get me here on time," replied the big man. "My ——, I almost prayed several times."

Olsen laughed loudly, whirled his long whip over the team and rattled away in a cloud of dust. Baldy and the big man got into the buckboard, swung the team around and headed across country toward the K-10 ranch.

"Lee Yung didn't come with yuh, eh?" queried Baldy, when he had slowed up to circle a washout.

"He came through last night. I thought it would be best. What is the latest news?"

"I don't know any news," replied Baldy. "Yuh see, I dunno what it's all about. Lee Yung didn't know either, Doc. We thought somethin' was wrong so Lee tells me he's goin' to Frisco and see Doc Meline. I ain't seen Lee since he came back."

"You didn't get my letter, eh?" asked Doctor Meline.

"I dunno anythin' about a letter."

"The letter I sent you a few days before somebody held up the stage."

"I didn't git no letter from yuh, Doc."

For some distance Doctor Meline remained silent. Then:

"Kern, I am only asking for a square deal. If you and the gang thought you could get that twenty thousand dollars——"

"Hold on!"

Kern jerked the horses to a stop and turned angrily to the big man.

"None of that, Doc. If you sent twenty thousand dollars by that stage, we never seen any of it."

"I beg your pardon," said Meline quickly. "I just wanted to know, Kern."

"Well, you found out. Git up!"

They drove on in silence for another mile. Then—

"Mind explainin' a few things?" asked Baldy.

"I came here to explain and to listen to explanations. I sent that twenty thousand dollars to Hawkworth, and I wrote you a letter, previous to shipping it, telling you when it would come Who got that letter?"

"I didn't," said Baldy shortly.

"Who takes your mail out to the ranch from Pinnacle?"

"Anybody who happens to be in town."

"Then there's a traitor at the K-10, Kern."

"You think that one of my men opened the letter?"

"And got help to rob that stage—yes."

"You're wrong, Doc. The night that stage was robbed every one of my men were at the ranch. Not a —— one of 'em was away."

"And the man who was shot that night, Kern. How is he?"

"All right, I reckon. Yuh see, they took him out to Hawkworth's ranch."

"To Hawkworth's ranch! Is that where he is now?"

"Well, I reckon he is, Doc. Doctor Henry couldn't get a nurse to take care of him, so they shipped him out there. I suppose he's gettin' along all right."

"Well, I'll be ——!"

The big man exploded into a booming laugh.

"Who is he?" asked Baldy, after Meline's mirth had subsided.

"Who is he? Kern, that young man is my son—Jack Meline."

"No!"

"Yes."

"Uh-huh." Baldy drew the team to a slow walk. "Doc, did you send him in here to spy on us?"

"Spy on you?"

"Yeah, spy on us. Now listen to me, Doc.

If you don't think that we're givin' you a square deal, hire somebody else. Don't spy. We've got to trust each other, or go bust. We're both crooks, but we can't afford to be crooked with each other. I'll run this end of the game and you run your end."

"Fair enough, Kern, but remember this: I can get men to run your end of it, but you can't replace me."

"That won't keep me from quittin'," replied Kern softly. "If I've got to watch you and watch some other gang who are tryin' to bust up our game, I'll quit. One of my men was killed the night that Lee Yung left for Frisco."

"The Chinaman told me. His name was Blair, if I remember correctly."

"Yeah, it was Blair. I sent him out to trail Torres."

"And Torres killed him, did he? Why did'nt you kill Torres?"

"Down in this country," said Baldy slowly, "yuh most always have to find a man before yuh can kill him."

"Where is he?"

"I dunno. Mebbe he's down at the Rancho Sierra."

"Why not hire Steve Guadalupe to kill him?"

"That's a fine idea. They're both Mexicans, and Steve is making too much easy money to be attracted by blood money."

They drove up to the K-10, and Baldy turned the team over to Jack Baum.

The K-10 ranch house was a long, adobe structure, situated on the edge of a mesa, which gave a fairly good view of the sweeping expanse of Hawk Hole. About a third of the house was used as a kitchen and dining-room, while the other two-thirds was a combination living quarters and bunk house.

Behind the house was a long series of low sheds and several corrals. Baldy introduced Doctor Meline to all the boys, except the Mexican cook, José, whose English was limited to profanity.

"I've seen you before, Doc," said "Two Fingers" Kohler, a hard-faced cowpuncher, who had lost three fingers from his left hand in an argument with a Mexican.

"Have you?" smiled the big man.

"Yeah, in Frisco," nodded Kohler. "You was standin' on a platform, under one of them gas'line lights, sellin' some kind of —— remedy. Yo're kinda slick with cards, ain'tcha? By golly, yuh shore done some cute tricks, but I don't s'pose that medicine would cure anythin'."

Meline flushed slightly and lighted a cigar. He had been the prince of fakir doctors until the police had stopped him from peddling a quack nostrum, a guaranteed cure-all, which was probably made from colored water and quinine.

THE newspapers had taken up the case, and the resultant advertising had caused Doctor Meline to retire to his big home out near the Presidio, where he proceeded to forget that he ever hawked cheap medicine with a ballyhoo, and to engage in a business of big returns with less publicity.

"Did yuh hear anythin' from the Tumblin' H today, Jack?" asked Baldy.

"Not a thing," replied Baum. "I seen Hartley and Stevens in town, but they was only there a few minutes."

"Who are they?" asked Meline curiously.

"Couple of punchers," said Baldy. "One of 'em had rheumatism and come here to bathe in Hawkworth's hot water."

"Yes?" Meline smoked slowly, thoughtfully. "Came here to bathe in the hot springs, eh? How long have they been here?"

"They came the night of the holdup."

"Did they? Hm-m-m. The night of the holdup. And what have they done since?"

"One of 'em stood Torres on his head in the blacksmith's slack-tub," grinned Baldy. "They were the ones who found Blair after he was killed."

"Yeah," said Kohler, "and I heard Doctor Henry say that Hartley was the one who got Hawkworth to take that wounded man out to the Tumblin' H ranch."

"Well!" Meline removed his cigar and grinned at Baldy. "It seems that these two cowpunchers have been real active. Baldy, did it ever occur to you that a stranger might be dangerous?"

"You mean, they might be——"

Baldy hesitated. Meline's smile was sneering, pitying.

"You poor fool, of course! Did you think that the Government would hire flat-footed detectives to investigate in a cattle country?"

Baldy flushed angrily and got to his feet.

"You cut out that 'fool' stuff, Meline," he warned. "You think that nobody has any brains but you, don'tcha?"

"Don't get riled," advised Meline coldly. "I've got a right to criticise, when my life and liberty are concerned."

"Your life and liberty be ——! You're nothin' but a retailer, Meline. We're the ones to take the chances. When bullets start flyin' in Hawk Hole, there's —— few of 'em that'll reach you in Frisco. You've covered yourself pretty —— well. Lee Yung and me are the only ones, until now, that knew who you were."

"All right. We won't argue, Kern. I'm sorry I had to come here. But maybe it is a good thing I did. Perhaps I was hasty in my criticism. I have learned to mistrust every one."

"You better git that out of yore system," advised Baldy. "I suppose you'll go over to see Hawkworth tomorrow, eh?"

"Don't be a fool, Kern. Hawkworth must not see me, and neither must he know I am here. He is probably the biggest fool I have ever known—but a dangerous fool."

"How long are yuh goin' to stay here?" asked Baldy.

"*Quien sabe.* There are a few things to clear up, Kern. I want to find out who stole that money and shot my son."

"You'll prob'ly be here a —— of a long time. Let's turn in. Take Blair's bunk, if yuh want to. He died in a good cause."

"Thanks. I am not afraid of dead men. They are harmless."

IT WAS the following day at the Tumbling H ranch that the wounded man came slowly out through the kitchen door and sat down in a blanket-covered rocking chair, which had been placed in the shade for him by Lucy.

He was still a trifle shaky, colorless, but able to get around. His thin face twisted wearily as he sat down and brushed back his black hair with a nervous gesture. It was wash day at the Tumbling H, and the invalid watched Wanna as she hung out the clothes, her arms bare to the shoulder, her black hair hanging down her back in a big braid.

From around the corner came the everlasting *rub-rub-rub* as Lucy scrubbed the clothes. Down at the corral, Hashknife, Sleepy and Musical were saddle breaking a colt, and having a big time out of it. The pseudo Jack Hill scowled at them, as he rolled a cigaret.

Wanna came back to the corner, carrying the empty basket. Jack smiled up at her and indicated for her to sit down on the steps. But Wanna shook her head with a smile.

"Work to be done," she said.

"I don't know how you stand it to live here all the time," he said. "My ——, I'd get the willies sure. And you say you've never been out of here, out of Hawk Hole?"

Wanna turned and scanned the hills, as she shook her head.

"No, I live here all the time."

"That's too bad, Wanna. I feel sorry for yuh. A pretty girl like you in a place like this. You ought to get out and see things, instead of living here and seeing nothing."

"What would I see?" she asked innocently.

"What? My gosh! The world—the cities—everything."

"Everything," she repeated slowly. "What is a city—like Pinnacle?"

Jack laughed at her ignorance. Neither of them knew that Big Medicine had come to the kitchen door.

"Not hardly like Pinnacle," said Jack laughing. "There are many big buildings, many people, bright lights and—life. You don't *live* out here, Wanna."

"You go back?" she asked.

"You bet. Just as soon as I can travel, I'm going back."

"Maybe I go some day," said Wanna wistfully. "I like to see everything."

"You'd enjoy it. I'd like to show you the city, Wanna."

"You like to show me?" eagerly.

Jack looked sidewise and a crooked smile twisted his lips.

"Yes, I would. You're pretty enough to show to anybody."

Lucy called sharply to Wanna and the girl went reluctantly back to her work. Big Medicine came slowly outside and stopped beside Jack's chair.

"I heard what you said to her."

Big Medicine's voice was pitched low. Jack twisted nervously. He was afraid of this big man.

"Well, what of it?" he asked.

"I've watched you and her," said Big Medicine softly. "Youth calls to youth, they say; but not in this case. I know your type, Jack Hill. The honor of a pretty girl means nothing to you. The cities are filled

with young men like you, idlers, wine hounds—and worse.

"Wanna is a half-breed. Her Indian blood makes her believe what you tell her, while her white blood makes a romance of your mysterious shooting. You are something new to her. You do not talk the language of the hills and cattle ranges, and she puts you above the rest of the men.

"You are trying to make her unhappy with her life, with your word pictures of the cities. You wouldn't marry her. To you she is a pretty girl, ignorant as a savage, something to play with. Let me tell you something, Jack Hill." Big Medicine leaned closer and lowered his voice to a whisper. "If you harm her in any way, by words or by actions, I'll kill you. That is my promise."

Big Medicine turned away and went back into the house, while Jack humped in his chair, his lips shut tightly, while the cigaret between his fingers, still glowing, was crushed to powder.

Inwardly he cursed Big Medicine, but deep in his heart he knew that Big Medicine spoke the truth. And he knew that the big man would keep his promise. But he hated Big Medicine now. It was true that he had filled Wanna's ears with tales of faraway places, many of them untrue, but today was the first time that she had intimated that she would care to see these places.

From inside his shirt he drew out a little silk covered parcel, hardly larger than an ordinary pocketbook. He seemed careful that no one might see what he was doing. Twisting the thing in his right hand he opened a flexible corner and poured a tiny bit of the white powder on his left wrist.

He lifted his left hand toward his face, an innocent enough motion, brought the tiny bit of powder in contact with his nostrils—a sniff—and it was gone. The silken bag was put back inside his shirt. Thereupon Jack Hill shrugged his shoulders, sighed deeply, contentedly, and became at peace with the world.

Just one person saw what he had done—Big Medicine. He had stood at the kitchen window, wondering what effect his warning would have, and he had seen Jack Hill take his dose of cocain. Big Medicine turned away, shaking his head, but resolving to be rid of Jack Hill as soon as possible.

Hashknife came up from the corral and stopped for a moment to chat with Jack.

"Feelin' better, eh?" he commented. "Yore color is better today. This is sure a great place to get well, pardner. It cured me of rheumatism in a week."

"I feel pretty good," replied Jack, none too graciously. "I'm all fed up on this place though, and the sooner I get out the better it will suit me."

"Yeah? Well, that's too bad, Hill. They've been mighty good to yuh here. Mrs. Hawkworth sure done a lot for you."

"She'll be well paid for it," gruffly.

"Yeah, I s'pose," Hashknife sighed. "She done a lot for me too, but I won't be able to pay much. Still, I can sure be just as grateful as I can be to her and Wanna."

"You rather like Wanna too, don't you?" There was a sneer in Jack's voice.

"Rather," said Hashknife softly.

"I thought so. Well, don't let me stand in your way, Hartley."

Hashknife's eyes half closed, as he looked at the younger man, a look that other men had seen just before a swift draw.

"Hill," he said icily, "yo're walkin' a narrow trail. Wanna is a mighty sweet girl, and I'm old enough to be her father. Yo're not in my way, young feller. If you was, I'd tie you in a hard knot, so —— hard that nothin' would ever untie yuh. Personally, I don't think yo're worth the dynamite it would take to blow yuh to ——. Now yuh know where I stand."

"I'm going to worry a lot about that," sneered Hill.

He was stimulated to a point where nothing would make him realize his foolishness. His eyes were slightly glassy and he laughed immoderately. Hashknife looked at him curiously, turned and went into the kitchen.

IKE MARSH rode in from Pinnacle and turned his horse into the corral. Ike had suffered another session of poker, which was one of his chief vices, but this time the Greenback saloon took most of his previous winnings.

He came up to the house, where he found Hashknife and Big Medicine in the living room.

"Wasn't no mail," he told Big Medicine. "Torres and Garcia came to Pinnacle last night, and Lee Yung came in on the stage yesterday mornin'. And that's all the news."

"That's quite a lot," observed Hashknife thoughtfully. "I wonder what will happen

now, Hawkworth. Both parties have been gone quite a while."

"That's hard to tell. If Baldy Kern thinks that Torres killed Blair, he will probably try to kill Torres. If Torres did try to kill you, and finds that he failed, he will probably try again."

"Sounds reasonable," grinned Hashknife. "I reckon I'll ride to Pinnacle this evenin'. If Mr. Torres wants another chance, I'll sure give it to him, unless Kern beats me to it."

"I'm goin' back," said Ike quickly. "I've got enough left to buy a couple stacks of white chips, and I ain't so sure but what I profited by my lesson of last night. I reckon Musical and Cleve intends to go in tonight."

Ike knew that neither Musical nor Cleve had any idea of going to Pinnacle that night, but he was paving the way for the Tumbling H to be well represented in case of trouble.

"This is not our trouble," Big Medicine reminded him.

"Oh, sure not."

Ike hadn't the slightest idea of mixing into any trouble. He went out, rattling his spurs, as he hurried down to tell Cleve and Musical that they were going to Pinnacle that night.

Hashknife smiled softly at Big Medicine. They had become fast friends during Hashknife's short stay at the Tumbling H.

"The boys are worth having at your back," said Big Medicine.

"Thank yuh," said Hashknife. "It kinda looks like there ain't nothin' in my hunch this time. The bunch from the K-10 seem as friendly as any one could be to me. Lookin' at it from the outside, all is serene.

"I've wanted to tell yuh for quite a while that me and Sleepy knew Sam Blair up in the Northwest. We rounded him up in a raid on a horse-thief gang, in which Blair was the only survivor. He escaped later, after shootin' a deputy sheriff, and nobody up there knowed where he went.

"I can't quite figure out what he was doin' out here that night. I don't think he knew that we were in this country. It is hardly possible that he recognized Sleepy, but started shootin' because he knowed he was caught."

"I wondered if you didn't know him," said Big Medicine. "Sleepy did not ask questions after the killing, and it seemed to me that he knew the man. But you have a poker face, Hartley. When you heard who had been killed, you did not change expression."

"Mebbe I wasn't quite right in the head," grinned Hashknife. "I got quite a tunk that night. I reckon we'll stick around 'till the last of the week, and if nothin' happens we'll drift."

"Stay as long as you wish," said Big Medicine quickly. "The Tumbling H is your home, Hartley, and it will be mighty lonesome when you leave. The boys like you and Sleepy, and I know how Lucy and Wanna feel toward both of you. Wanna isn't the kind to say things, but I can tell. And let me tell you something—" Big Medicine smiled broadly—"Lucy says to me—

" 'We must get more cattle.'

"I asked her why we should get more cattle, and she said—

" 'Hire two more cowboys.' "

Hashknife laughed softly over his cigaret.

"Mabbe she likes us because I talk a little of the language she ain't heard for a long time, Hawkworth."

"Perhaps. But she says nothing about that part of it. Lucy likes company. I'm English, Hartley. I was born of a family in which there were too much money and too many sons. I was educated in England, brought up with some queer traditions in my brain, some queer ideas, you might call them.

"You wonder why I married a squaw? —— knows, I sometimes wonder why myself. Perhaps it was because I lost faith. But no matter. Lucy has been a good wife. I suppose I did not realize what I was doing when I married her, but the realization came later."

Big Medicine hooked his hands over his knees and stared at the threadbare carpet, deep in thought.

"The realization," he continued softly, "was the fact that my children would be half-breeds. They could never take their place with the whites. It seemed to me that the Indian blood would predominate, always. And one reason for that would be the fact that they would know that they had an Indian mother.

"You have known Indians and half-breeds, Hartley. And you know that the half-breed never measures up. They inherit the vices of both bloods and the virtues of neither. They are a weak-kneed, and often treacherous combination.

"And that realization hurt, Hartley. I suppose it is the old pride of ancestry cropping out; my inheritance of a hide-bound pride, in which the children are the greater. It was like a blow in the face, when the realization came to me. Perhaps I might have left Lucy and married a white woman—but I didn't. I've some of the instincts of a gentleman left, some honor. But I knew that my offspring would always work under the handicap of an Indian mother."

"And knowin' that would make 'em more red than white?" asked Hashknife. "Is that yore theory, Hawkworth?"

"Yes.. I wonder—" he lifted his head and looked at Hashknife keenly—"I wonder if a child born of a white man and an Indian woman, brought up away from them and taught to believe that nothing but white blood flowed in his or her veins—would they not be the same as a pure breed?"

"The psychology of ignorance?" smiled Hashknife. "I don't know, Hawkworth. But what satisfaction would that be to either the white man or the Indian squaw? It might be a good experiment, but goshawful tough on the parents. By golly, I'd raise my own kid—regardless of who or what its mother might be."

"And not give the child a chance?"

"That's yore hide-bound English croppin' out, Hawkworth. If the child was worth a ——, it would make its own chance. Suppose you had done that with Wanna. Would she be any better off?"

"No white man would marry her, Hartley."

"No? Then let her pick a man to suit herself. If a white man won't marry her, what's the odds? You talk like there wasn't any good men in the world, except white men. I'm sorry to say that I've done battle with a lot of thieves, crooks and murderers; many of them are lookin' up at the grassroots right now—and they were all white men, Hawkworth."

"I get your viewpoint, Hartley. Perhaps you are right. It is only a theory, at best. Living here for twenty-five years, I have had plenty of time for theorizing. It has been a long time, my friend, longer than you can realize. Men say that Big Medicine Hawkworth is a queer person, and that he is unfriendly. Some of them hate me because I own Hawk Hole, and hold it.

"Since the town of Pinnacle was built, Hawk Hole's morals have not improved. The Greenhorn mines have brought the riffraff of the Southwest into this place, until it seems to be a happy hunting ground for high graders, cattle thieves, smugglers. Is it any wonder that I do not welcome a stranger to my home?"

"I figure we were lucky to get in," smiled Hashknife.

Big Medicine's eyes twinkled.

"Do you know what did it? When I asked you what you wanted, you said, 'Not what he got,' referring to Jim Reed, whom I had thrown out of my house. It struck me that your sense of humor was too keen to be owned by less than a gentleman."

Hashknife laughed softly.

"Mr. Reed sure came out. He didn't do any complainin' at all either. Just grabbed his bronc and whaled away from here. I took one look at you, and says to myself, 'Here's the prophet, Elijah, wearin' high-heeled boots.'

"And you kinda had a habit of switchin' from good English to cow-town United States, Hawkworth. It was interestin' to me. Some folks had kinda warned us against comin' out to see you; but that would make me come if nothin' else did. If a man or a woman is worth sayin' things against, they're worth meetin'."

"And you've been worth talking to, Hashknife," said Big Medicine warmly. "I hope your hunch, as you call it, will keep you in Hawk Hole for a long time. My definition of the word 'gentleman' has changed so greatly that I hesitate to use it; so I feel more safe in calling you my friend than a gentleman. I have a bottle of very old whisky, older than you are, my friend, and I think it is a proper time to drink a health."

"To you," said Hashknife, and Big Medicine went after the bottle.

PEDRO TORRES was just vain enough over his knife-throwing ability to feel sure that he had killed the man who had humiliated him. Until he came back to Pinnacle, there was not a doubt in his mind but that Hashknife Hartley had not lived long enough to know what had struck him.

But discreet questioning had brought him the information that Hashknife Hartley had evidently entirely recovered from his attack of rheumatism and was again enjoying good health.

And it was a distinct shock to hear that Sam Blair had been killed that night, halfway between Pinnacle and the Tumbling H ranch, and that a long-bladed knife had been found at the scene of the killing.

Torres rubbed his chin and considered things. He hated to admit to himself that he had miscalculated his throw, but how did his knife happen to be found near Blair's body? The description of the knife, meager as it was, convinced Torres that it was the one he had flung at Hashknife from the shadows of the bath house.

But how had it been found beside a dead man, far removed from the yard of the Tumbling H? Torres rubbed his chin some more and decided that there was some hocus pocus in the wind. He had seen his victim fall. He questioned the slow-witted Garcia.

"He died," declared Garcia in Spanish.

"He lives," retorted Torres. "Sam Blair died a mile or more from the place where I threw the knife, and my knife was found beside him."

"That is evil fortune," said Garcia. "Other men will see that knife and know who owns it."

"Croaking buzzard!" Torres spat angrily. "I must have hurried my throw—and it was dark."

"A mile is a long throw," observed Garcia blandly.

"I will kill you some day for being such a fool," replied Torres. "Still," he reflected, "it was found there, and who would leave it beside the dead body of Sam Blair? He was shot to death."

"Your knife did not kill him?"

"No."

"Then you have nothing to fear. He was not killed with your knife."

"If I was not there, how did my knife fall to the ground?" demanded Torres hotly. "Perhaps I shot him and lost the knife."

"Perhaps." Garcia was agreeable. "I think we will be safer across the border."

But Torres shook his head.

"Not yet. Some of these days we might, but not now. There is too much money to be made here."

"A slit throat does not taste wine," said Garcia. "Money is of no value to a corpse. I would rather drink Guadalupe's vile tequila in safety than to risk my neck for champagne."

"There may be virtue in all that," replied Torres. "Go, if you are afraid. If not, stop croaking. I have business to attend in Pinnacle. Guadalupe sent a message to Kern yesterday by that half wit, Perez—who let me read it for the price of a quart of mescal."

"It must have been of great value—to Perez," grinned Garcia.

"We shall later discover its value. As for you, say nothing."

Torres did no more questioning, and was doubly cautious. He felt sure that sooner or later some one would mention the knife to him, and he could not think of a single reason for losing that knife. The only thing he could do would be to deny that he had been near the spot where Blair had died, and swear that he had missed the knife when undressing at the Rancho Sierra.

It was very true that he *had* missed the knife. It was a favorite blade, and one he had carried a long time. One does not find a good throwing blade every day. He carried a revolver, under his sash and inside the waist band of his trousers; but he was not a gunman, preferring the more silent weapon.

LEE YUNG, the fat, bland-faced Chinaman, sat stolidly in a chair at a poker table, pitting his wits against Faro Lanning. The rest of the players were of no moment to Lee Yung, who would bet a thousand dollars with about the same emotion as a sphinx.

Torres wanted to play poker, but not in such fast company, so he confined his efforts to trying to outguess the roulette wheel, where he could also keep an eye on the front door.

It was after dark that Hashknife, Sleepy, Ike Marsh, Musical Matthews and Cleve Davis came in. They clanked up to the bar and greeted the bartender vociferously. Hashknife saw Torres and grinned widely. Torres tried to smile, but the effort was too great.

In his perturbation he made a foolish bet, and watched the dealer sweep away his money. Hashknife swung away from the bar and came toward the roulette game. He seemed entirely unconcerned, but his eyes took in every move made by the dandy Mexican.

Torres' right hand moved nervously toward his sash, stopped, dropped back to his side. He knew that there was no use of him provoking trouble, so he proceeded to use discretion.

"How's she goin'?" asked Hashknife pleasantly.

"*Buena*," said Torres.

He watched Hashknife place several small bets, wondering why this tall cowpuncher, who had so blithely dumped him into the tub of dirty water, seemed to have forgotten it so soon. He wondered if it was ignorance or bravado.

Hashknife looked up from his bets and studied Torres' clothes.

"You've been away quite a while, ain't yuh, Torres?"

"Did you miss me?"

Torres lifted his eyebrows. Hashknife grinned and shook his head.

"No, I didn't miss yuh, but I see yore clothes are dry."

Torres flushed at the reminder. He did not want to be baited by this man; and yet he did not know how to prevent it, except by walking away. Hashknife was laughing at him, and it suddenly occurred to Torres that this man's laugh was not derisive. The joke seemed to be on Torres, so he laughed with Hashknife.

"That's a lot better," said Hashknife. "There are things that are a lot better to forget, pardner."

"I have forgotten them," said Torres earnestly. "Perhaps I made a mistake."

"Mebbe," grinned Hashknife.

Garcia leaned against the wall near the roulette wheel, his arms folded under his dirty serape, feeling of the knife hilt inside his shirt. He heard what Torres said, and his hands came in sight to fumble with a cigaret.

Hashknife drifted away from the wheel and joined Sleepy near the bar.

"I kinda looked for that Mexican to make a break," said Sleepy softly. "I had my eye on that jigger beside the wall, too. He's got somethin' under that dirty blanket thing he's wearin', and I reckon it's a knife. I was just waitin' for somethin' to start and then I was goin' to hang him to the wall on the hot end of a bullet."

"I reckon I've kinda squared things with Torres," observed Hashknife.

"Thasso?" Sleepy scratched his hand on his thigh. "What's the idea of squarin' things with him?"

"I've got to pry into things some way," said Hashknife. "I'm bettin' that there's two outfits in on some kind of a deal, and I've got to dig my way into one of 'em."

"If we showed any sense, we'd dig out of here," declared Sleepy. "Prob'ly get ourselves into a jam over nothin'."

"Somebody got Big Medicine's money, Sleepy."

"Yeah, I know that."

"And somebody tried to kill yore little playmate."

"Well, go ahead, cowboy. I s'pose you could dig up a lot more reasons for stayin' here."

Hashknife laughed. He knew that Sleepy would never quit complaining if they rode out of Hawk Hole without finding out why certain things had happened. It was Sleepy's nature to talk as if he were a prize pessimist.

At about nine o'clock Baldy Kern, Jack Baum and Three-Finger Kohler came into the Greenback saloon. Baldy nodded to Hashknife, as they came up to the bar, and Hashknife and Sleepy moved aside to give them more room.

The three men talked in an undertone, as they drank. It seemed that Baldy cautioned Kohler about something, and Hashknife heard Kohler reply angrily—

"Oh to —— with that Government spy."

Hashknife wondered who Kohler meant, until he saw Jack Baum flash a sidewise look at him, and then he realized that possibly they were talking about him. It was sufficient to put him on his guard.

Baldy turned from the bar and scanned the room. Torres was at the roulette wheel, facing Baldy, but seemingly absorbed in the game. Baldy turned his head slightly toward Baum and spoke guardedly, but too softly for Hashknife to hear what he said.

Then he moved away from the bar, stopped for a moment at the poker table to speak to some one in the game and sauntered toward the roulette wheel. Baum and Kohler moved away from the bar, keeping their eye on Baldy.

"Look out," whispered Hashknife. "Somethin' is due to break."

Baldy was only ten feet from Torres now, and they were looking at each other. The dealer called the winning number, but Torres did not look down at the table.

"You dirty Mexican!" snapped Baldy. "You killed Sam Blair!"

As Baldy spat his accusation he whipped out his gun. Baldy was fast on the draw, as deadly as a striking rattlesnake. But before he could pull the trigger the light

flashed on a spinning knife-blade, which Garcia had thrown from beside the wall, and Baldy's wrist was pierced just above the joint.

His hand splayed open and the heavy gun clanged to the floor, as he jerked back, throwing up his wounded arm.

Kohler flung himself forward, drawing a gun, but stumbled over Hashknife's outflung foot and lunged heavily to the floor, almost under the roulette wheel. Torres darted toward the front door, while Garcia chose to make his exit at the rear, and all the while Jack Baum was trying to get past the clumsy Sleepy, who seemed to be innocently trying to efface himself from the scene.

It was only a matter of seconds before it was all over. The room was in an uproar. Baldy was swearing painfully, as he tried to check the bleeding of his wrist, assisted by Lee Yung. Kohler was still trying to find his gun, which had flipped out of his hand, and Jack Baum was trying to make up his mind whether Sleepy blocked him intentionally, or whether Sleepy was the most clumsy lout he had ever met.

Kohler's face was scarlet, as he painfully dusted his knees and peered under the roulette wheel, where he found his gun. He holstered it savagely and came back toward the bar. He faced Hashknife, shaking with rage.

"You tripped me!" he snorted. "—— you, why did you do it?"

"Yore feet are too wide," said Hashknife evenly. "How much room do yuh need?"

The crowd lost interest in Baldy's injuries now.

"You tripped me on purpose!" roared Kohler. "I'll show you how I pay——"

He drew back his right fist and let drive with a blow that was so obvious that Hashknife moved easily aside to avoid it and smashed Kohler square in the center of his wide throat. Kohler seemed to be falling almost before the *splat* of the blow, and he went flat on his face. Hashknife stepped back, his right hand swinging loosely at his side, and glanced around.

Jack Baum was standing almost against the bar, his hands half-raised, while Sleepy was very close to him, his gun-muzzle resting square against Baum's waistline. Baldy's face was gray with pain and anger, but he was in no condition to lend any one assistance.

Some of the men turned Kohler over on his back, while the bartender poured a glass of water over his face. The knockout was so complete that many of the men ventured the opinion that Kohler was dead. Lee Yung examined him and shook his head.

"He is not badly hurt," was Lee Yung's opinion. "For a long time he will swallow with difficulty, I think."

"Hashknife, you shore pressed his old Adam's-apple," applauded Musical Matthews. 'My ——, what a complete cleanup!"

"You can put down yore hands," said Sleepy to Jack Baum.

Baum lowered his hands, but was careful to keep them away from his gun. Kohler coughed and sat up, painfully massaging his throat, while his eyes squinted around, as if wondering what it was all about. Some one helped him into a chair, and the bartender asked him how he was feeling, but Kohler's voice had fled.

"Tied a knot in his vocal cords," observed Ike gleefully.

Baldy finished bandaging his wrist. Lee Yung found his gun and put it in the holster for Baldy, who came closer to Hashknife.

"I've been wonderin' what you was doin' down here," he said slowly, and loud enough for every one to hear. "I reckon yo're rheumatism is near enough cured for you to *vamoose*. Take my advice and get out *muy pronto, hombre*.

"Torres killed one of my men, Hartley. You stopped me from paying him back for this murder, or rather you stopped my men from doin' what I started in to do. Yore breed don't thrive in this country, so take my advice, right now."

Hashknife smiled easily.

"How do you know Torres killed Blair?"

"I know —— well he did!"

"All right. Tell me what Blair was doin' the night Torres is supposed to kill him."

"How in —— do I know!"

"Why would Torres kill him?"

"Well, I—I dunno, but——"

"The fact of the matter is—yo're guessin', Kern. I reckon Blair got what was comin' to him. And as far as Hawk Hole bein' unhealthy for my breed, I've lived and had my bein' in some —— infested localities. I'll remember what yuh said, Kern. Barkin' dogs don't bite, they say, but they kinda make yuh keep yore head up and yore eyes open."

Baldy squinted at Hashknife and down at his throbbing wrist.

"Mebbe you know who killed Blair," he said.

"Which shows that *you* don't," said Hashknife easily.

Baldy considered the answer for several moments, turned and walked out, followed by Jack Baum. Kohler followed them with his eyes, as if afraid to trust his legs to carry him out. Then he got up from his chair and went unsteadily out into the street.

NO ONE spoke for several moments after they went out. The poker players went back to their chairs, and the roulette started in where it left off. Faro Lanning came behind the bar to get a drink before renewing his game, and asked Hashknife and Sleepy to partake of his hospitality.

"It ain't none of my business," he said confidentially, "but perhaps you acted right in that matter. Baldy wasn't sure, you see. Personally I don't think that Torres killed Blair. Torres is a knife fighter, pure and simple. Unless it was an accident, Torres could never stick two bullets into any target as close as them two were stuck into Sam Blair. But look out for Kern. Well, here's regards."

They drank to each other and Lanning went back to his game. Lee Yung's expressionless eyes considered Hashknife's back, while they drank at the bar, but turned away as they finished.

Hashknife and Sleepy joined the three boys from the Tumbling H, and they went to the Welcome saloon.

The K-10 horses were missing from the Greenback rack, which was conclusive evidence that Baldy had led his gang home.

"Wouldn't have missed this evenin' for a fortune," declared Musical. "It was jist zip, boom, bang! Say, that Garcia shore is a knife-throwin' ——, ain't he? Pinned Baldy's wrist as nice as yuh please. Probably figured that his hand or arm was the only safe place to throw at to stop the shot."

"Makes me kinda twitch," admitted Ike. "Dang a knife! They kinda slither, don't they? If a feller ever comes after me with a knife, I'm goin' to plumb forget that I know how to do 'anythin', except run like ——."

"Shore a nasty thing," declared Cleve. "It ain't none of my business, Hartley, but I was wonderin' why yuh didn't let Baldy go ahead. Somebody has got to kill Torres."

"I reckon that's right," nodded Hashknife. "Somebody will have to kill him eventually, but I hope they'll kill him for somethin' that he done. Yuh see, he didn't kill Blair."

"I know it, but he tried to kill you."

"Yeah, but he didn't make good at it, Cleve."

"Oh, ——!" Cleve shrugged his shoulders and offered to buy a drink. "You argue jist like Big Medicine does. Take a chance like that to save a danged Mexican, who o'rt to be hidin' out from yore gun. I don't *sabe* yuh."

"I don't know that Torres tried to kill me, Cleve. There's a lot of folks that pack knives around here."

"Aw, don't argue with him," advised Sleepy. "He's got some awful queer notions in his head."

"I ain't goin' to," declared Cleve. "His notions may be queer, but his punch ain't. I vote that we go home."

"Home gits elected," stated Musical. "C'mon."

TWENTY-FOUR hours later, four mounted men, leading a packed horse, rode slowly through the brushy, broken hills near the border. They traveled in single file, the front rider leading the pack animal, with no sound except the soft creak of leather, or the faint "rip" of brush against boot and chap.

The feet of the horses were muffled with sacking, which left no tracks and also deadened their footfalls. It was as if a fantom caravan passed through the dimly lighted hills. There was no trail, but the leader picked his way unerringly, heading for the dark mass of hill to the north, which separated them from Hawk Hole.

Somewhere a coyote sent up his plaintive cry, an eery sound in the silent hills. To the left of the leader a stick snapped, and he jerked up his horse. The caravan stopped. The pack horse tried to nose past the leader, who swore softly and struck it across the nose with a rope end.

"All right," called the leader softly and started ahead.

From the left came the crashing report of a rifle, and the lead horse lunged forward,

falling head first, throwing its rider into the brush. Another shot, and another, crashed out from the depths of the brush, while the other three riders whirled their horses out of the bottom of the swale, firing back at the flashes of powder.

The leader was running up the side of the slope, calling for one of the men to wait for him. The pack horse whirled and ran the opposite way, crashing through the brush. The hillside was flashing with rifle and revolver shots now, although those in ambush were still keeping under cover and holding a decided advantage.

The riders were drawing farther away now. The leader had succeeded in mounting behind one of the other riders. Then they disappeared over the ridge and the firing stopped. The pack horse had crossed the ridge to the left, lunging through the heavy brush, trying to fight its way into open country, but a man ran out and grasped the flying rope, whirling the horse to a stop on the rocky slope.

Three more men swiftly gathered around the pack animal, and hurried it down through a cañon and out the other side, where four horses were tethered. They mounted swiftly and flogged the pack animal into a run, down across the broken slopes and on to a rutty road, which ran northwest into the hills.

As before the lead rider took care of the pack horse, while the rest bunched behind, swinging a rope end across the pack animal's rump at the least sign of slowing down.

There was nothing cautious about their progress. It seemed that above all things they desired speed. Perhaps they were afraid that the other riders might intercept them, as they kept a close watch at the ridges to the north and east.

The reports of the rifle and revolver shots carried for a long way in that thin atmosphere, and attracted the attention of three other riders, who were following a trail further to the west. After a hasty consultation they swung to the right and rode as swiftly as possible, heading northwest.

Straight up the rutty old road pounded the four men with the pack animal, heading for a low pass in the hills, where the old road wound down to Pinnacle. They were almost to the summit, when the three riders flashed into view, coming swiftly down a broken hogback, clearly outlined against the sky.

The four men swore feelingly and urged the tired pack horse to greater speed. One of the three riders yelled at them, but the four riders and pack animal swung into the downward road ahead, while the men from the hogback struck the road three hundred yards behind.

All of the horses were weary from their uphill run, and there was little choice between the two factions in the race, except that those in the lead were hampered with the pack horse, which seemed disinclined to make it a runaway.

Near the bottom of the hill, and within half a mile of Pinnacle, the race swung to the left, circling the bottom of the hills and heading toward the Tumbling H ranch. The three riders in the rear were around a series of sharp curves when those in the lead decided to make it a cross-country race, and as a result they raced past the turning-off place and lost valuable time in picking up the trail again.

The pack horse was giving its captors plenty of trouble now, and they took turns in beating it with rope ends to sustain speed. The pursuers were gaining a little because of this drawback, but were not near enough to make shooting accurate in that hazy light.

The chase swung nearer to the Tumbling H and the leaders circled slightly as if to head into the cañon at the rear of the ranch. Their horses were beginning to falter, and the pack animal was wheezing heavily.

The pursuers swung more to the right, taking advantage of the more open going, and their added speed caused the others to turn sharply toward the rear of the Tumbling H.

Unfortunately for the pursuers they had swung too wide, passing the head of a deep washout, which angled in such a way that their course to the Tumbling H was blocked, and they were forced to swing back and lose much time in circling the head of it again.

Their quarry had disappeared at the rear of the Tumbling H, in the blocky shadows of the cañon mouth, forcing the pursuers to go carefully for fear of an ambush. It was several minutes later that the four riders came into view again, swinging back over a ridge several hundred yards away and heading in the general direction in which they had come.

The three riders swung their horses away from the Tumbling H, and again took up the

chase into the hills. But the chase was of short duration this time. Only once, after crossing the ridge, did the pursuers get a glimpse of the other riders, and then they disappeared completely. So far away were they that the three riders drew up their jaded horses, swore to do better next time and headed back toward the road.

WHILE the pursuit went into the hills, Hashknife Hartley leaned out of their little window and listened. Sleepy was snoring loudly, unmindful of the thud of hoofs which had brought Hashknife from the land of dreams to investigate.

He knew that the horses had passed close to the corral, although he had been unable to glimpse any of them. Softly he drew on his boots, buckled on his belt and slid out through the narrow window, which was only a few feet above the floor.

Hashknife chuckled at his appearance and hoped that none of the Hawkworth family might awake and see him. He was clad in a gray suit of underwear, which had changed its original shape from many washings, a pair of boots and a cartridge belt.

He went slowly out across the yard and around to the corral gate, scanning the hills for any sign of the horses which had passed. A chill wind was blowing, which Hashknife realized was not the best thing in the world for his rheumatism, and he was about to turn back when something inside the corral attracted his attention.

His investigation disclosed the fact that a weary-legged pack horse was standing in there, head hanging low, and showing every indication of having traveled far and fast. Hashknife spoke to the animal and examined the pack, which consisted of pack sacks, hung to a pack saddle and lightly covered with a tarpaulin, over which a diamond hitch had been thrown.

"Kinda queer," observed Hashknife to himself. "Somebody sure left this animal here in a hurry, so we better have a look."

Swiftly he took off the hitch, threw aside the tarpaulin and lifted down the pack sacks. A short investigation showed him what the sacks contained. For several moments he debated. It was a dangerous cargo to be handling; worth a fortune in the right place. And the owners were sure to come back after it.

He picked up the two sacks, went through the corral gate and into the cañon, where he dumped the contents and came back with the sacks.

Hashknife knew how to throw the diamond hitch, and in a few minutes the animal was packed again, sans contents. The rawhide pack sacks held their shapes, and would have to be taken off the saddle before the lack of contents would be noted.

Then he went back up the cañon and began disposing of what he had confiscated. It was considerable of a task to put it all away in the dark and to obliterate all sign of the burying, and he was busy for the greater part of an hour.

And he was so busy that he did not see a man sneak around the corner of the barn, lead the horse out of the corral and disappear. But he discovered the loss of the horse when he went back past the corral. The gate sagged open, creaking slightly in the wind. So he fastened it and went back to the house and crawled into the window.

Sleepy's snores still resounded in the little room, and Hashknife grinned widely to himself, as he snuggled down into the blankets.

"Somebody's goin' to swear real hard when they unpack that horse," he told himself. "And me, like a darn fool, got so blamed excited that I never even looked at its brand. All fools ain't dead yet, but one of 'em is feelin' twinges of rheumatics."

IT WAS just at daylight that Baldy Kern, Jack Baum, Three Finger Kohler and Ben Horan rode in at the K-10 ranch. Baldy was mounted behind Jack Baum, and they were a disgruntled quartet of cowmen.

Kohler's right cheek was streaked with blood from a bullet furrow, and Ben Horan's ribs were still aching from a bullet, which had scored them. They dismounted and turned their horses into the corral.

Doctor Meline met them at the corral, and his expression showed that he was worried.

"Well?" he queried shortly.

"No well about it!" snapped Baldy. "C'mon in the house."

Meline followed him in, trailed by the others, and they sat down.

"Somebody got wise," said Baldy wearily. "We lost the stuff."

"You lost it!"

Meline almost screamed. He got to his feet and glared down at Baldy.

"You lost all that stuff, Kern?"

"Yeah."

"My ——!" Meline looked foolishly around. "It—it was a fortune."

"—— near misfortune," said Kohler. "An inch nearer and I wouldn't 'a' had any face left."

"Same here, and I'm ribless," complained Horan.

"Well, well!" said Meline nervously. "Tell me about it."

"There ain't much to tell," said Kern. "We got the stuff from Guadalupe and had it packed. We muffled the horses hoofs and took the trail that Guadalupe picked out. Everythin' was fine until a little ways this side of the border, where we runs into an ambush.

"They downed my horse the first shot and the pack animal got away. I managed to get up behind Jack, but we didn't have a chance. They were in the brush, where we couldn't see 'em, and we were out in the open. We got away—thassall."

"And they got the pack horse, did they?" Meline paced the floor nervously. "Got away with a fortune!"

He turned to Baldy.

"Was it Government officers?"

"——, we didn't see nobody!" snapped Baldy. "I tell yuh, it was all set for us, and we horned right into it. Do yuh suppose that Steve Guadalupe double-crossed us?"

"Perhaps. Say, what about that greaser that brought us the note?"

"Felipe? ——, no. He's half-witted. He wouldn't do anythin' crooked, 'cause he ain't got sense enough."

"All right."

Meline stopped pacing the floor and looked at the four men. Kohler swore softly and caressed his cheek. From the kitchen came the sound of the Mexican cook, banging the dishes as he prepared breakfast.

"Baldy, there is something wrong around here," said Meline coldly. "Somebody stole that letter I sent you, and somebody knew that our cargo was coming through that place tonight. There's a traitor, and the sooner we find out who it is the better."

"Not better for him, Doc," said Baldy angrily.

"You don't need to look at me, Doc!" snapped Horan. "If I was a traitor I wouldn't take a chance like that. I think too —— much of my ribs."

"Nobody's accusin' any of you boys," said Baldy. "You walked into the trap with me."

"Then where is he?" queried Meline. "He's on the inside of our deals. You don't know whether it was Government officers or not?"

"How could I Still they don't usually bushwhack. I've got a hunch that somebody stole our cargo for themselves. Somebody knew that we were comin' across last night, that's a cinch. If it had been Government officers they would 'a' tried to nail us along with the stuff."

"Yes, that's true. Do you suppose it could have been the work of those strange cowboys?"

"It sure could," grunted Kohler, his hand going to his neck.

"Torres!" exploded Baldy. "By ——, this is his work. He's in with Steve Guadalupe, and I'll bet he found out about that cargo. They're both Mex, —— 'em!"

"Yes, and Hartley and Stevens are in with Torres," growled Kohler. "If they wasn't, why did they block us. I vote that we go and get them two smart punchers."

"But that doesn't prove that there is a traitor among us," said Meline. "Who got that letter? Torres had nothing to do with your mail, Baldy."

"Mebbe the letter was lost and Torres found it," suggested Horan.

"Hardly probable. What kind of a person was this Blair?"

"Blair was all right," said Baldy, adjusting the bandage on his wrist. "I sent Blair out to trail Torres and Garcia the night Blair was killed. Them two Mexicans went out of here, headin' south, but they must have circled and bushwhacked Blair."

The Mexican cook announced breakfast, and they all trooped in to eat. The loss of the big cargo was a blow to Meline, who had paid for it in hard cash. He was still complaining about the loss of the money he had sent to Big Medicine Hawkworth, which he had only valued at five hundred dollars with the express company.

And he was half afraid of Baldy Kern and his hard-riding crew. He could not bulldoze them, and he knew that their loyalty to him was only because of the fact that he paid well. It was true that Baldy Kern had an interest in the business, but dollars

did not mean as much to Baldy as they did to Meline.

"What about Lee Yung?" asked Baldy, as they ate breakfast. "Can yuh trust him, Doc?"

"Why not? He lost as much as I did on the deal?"

"If he wasn't in on it," suggested Baldy meaningly.

Meline shook his head. He did not believe that the Chinaman would doublecross him. The boys finished breakfast and rolled into their bunks for a sleep, while Meline sat down and tried to figure out who was trying to spoil his game; a game that was causing much concern among the custom inspectors and making big money for those actively interested.

AND at the same hour of the morning the Tumbling H outfit ate breakfast to the scratching music of "The Holy City," while Musical Matthews, a boot in each hand, sat before the ornate horn of the old machine and drank in the song.

Hashknife had said nothing about the events of the night. Jack Hill was able to attend the meal, but said little. Since Big Medicine had upbraided him he had been sullenly silent, except when he had an opportunity to speak alone with Wanna.

As a result the boys of the Tumbling H ignored him. They had been considerate of him, but not friendly.

"Hair's too slick," declared Ike, and that seemed to be their general opinion.

But their indifference had little effect on Jack Hill, who looked upon them as a lot of uncouth louts, which, from his view point, they probably seemed to be.

Breakfast was hardly over when three men rode up to the house and dismounted. Big Medicine saw them through the window, and he squinted wonderingly.

"Federal officers," he said. "Three of 'em."

He went to the door, followed by the other men. It was the first visit of the officers, three hard-bitten border officers, Ed McGurk, Art Whaley and "Skinner" Burns.

"Hello, Hawkworth," said McGurk, as his eyes searched the faces of Hashknife and Sleepy, knowing that they were strangers.

"Good-morning, McGurk," replied Big Medicine easily. "Riding early, it seems."

"Does seem thataway," nodded the officer. "Rode a lot earlier than this—and others done the same."

"Yes? I don't quite understand you."

"I'm not talkin' riddles," said McGurk. "Mebbe yuh don't know what I mean, and mebbe yuh do. Last night—" McGurk shifted his belt a trifle, but kept his eyes on Big Medicine's face—"we chased three men and a pack horse, comin' from toward the border.

"They had the jump on us. We chased 'em here to yore place, where they gave us the slip long enough to make a getaway. We follered 'em over the ridge on the south side of the cañon back of here, but lost 'em in the breaks."

"Interesting," said Big Medicine.

"Yeah, it is," McGurk was sarcastic. "Yuh remember I spoke about a pack animal? Well, when we gave up the chase, Skinner says he's sure they've ditched the pack horse. We decided to circle back this way and take another look, and we runs slap into a feller takin' the horse away from here, from yore ranch."

"From here?" queried Big Medicine wonderingly.

"Yeah, from here. But he seen us at the same time. The pack horse was too tired to run, so he cut loose and got away down through a manzanita flat, but we got the pack animal."

"Well—and then what?" asked Big Medicine.

"The pack sacks were empty."

"Empty?"

"Yeah, empty! They wasn't empty when that horse was left here."

"How do yuh know?" asked Hashknife.

McGurk squinted closely at Hashknife.

"Who are you?" he asked coldly.

"Do yuh have to tell yore name in order to ask a question?"

McGurk spat angrily, while the Tumbling H boys grinned.

"I'll ask the same question, if you don't care to answer Mr. Hartley," said Big Medicine. "How do you know that the pack sacks weren't empty when the horse came to my ranch, McGurk?"

"Would them three men fight so hard for a getaway, if there wasn't smuggled stuff on that horse?" demanded McGurk.

"Mebbe they stole the horse," suggested Sleepy.

"Na-a-aw, ——!" exploded Skinner Burns angrily.

"I've knowed horse thieves to put up a —— of a race and a fight to get away," said Sleepy innocently.

"The —— yuh have?" grunted McGurk. "You've been around quite a lot, ain't yuh?"

"Twice," said Sleepy.

"Around where?" asked Burns.

"Quite a lot."

"All right," said McGurk angrily. "This ain't gettin' us no place. We'll search the place, Hawkworth. You know we've got the right to do this."

"Certainly, McGurk. The Tumbling H has nothing to conceal."

The three officers headed for the stable, while the men of the Tumbling H grouped together and followed them. They all knew, except Hashknife, that the officers were all wrong, and he felt sure that they would not find his cache.

Nor did they. After an hour of searching, which included the ranch house, they were forced to admit that nothing had been overlooked. They were satisfied that the Tumbling H contained no contraband, but they were not contented.

"Yuh didn't overlook any place, didja?" asked Hashknife, when the officers came back to their horses.

"If we think of any place we didn't look, we'll come back," said McGurk peevishly. "You got away with it this time, I guess."

"Kinda looks like it," grinned Hashknife. "Mind tellin' us what was in them pack sacks?"

McGurk looked him over coldly. He wanted to make some cutting remark, but Hashknife's grin was too infectious. So McGurk grinned, although wearily, and mounted his horse.

"I don't know what was in 'em," he admitted. "I don't know whether there was anythin' in 'em or not. The rest of the story is just like I told it to you. Drugs are bein' run across the line in big bunches, and if any man deserves killin', it's a drug runner. Lotsa times I can forgive a horse thief or a murderer, but not a drug runner."

"Same here," said Hashknife thoughtfully. "Officer, you've got the story pretty straight, but there's a few pages missin'. Go back to the border and try again next time. I reckon there'll be a next time."

"What do you mean?" queried McGurk.

"You'll have to guess," grinned Hashknife.

THE three officers rode away, wondering what Hashknife meant, while the Tumbling H men lost no time in asking Hashknife what he meant. But Hashknife refused to say. He knew what it would mean to Big Medicine to have that cargo of drugs found on the Tumbling H, so he said nothing. Jack Hill, the invalid, heard what had been said, from just inside the front door, but asked no questions.

He went back to his seat in the shade at the rear of the ranch house, where he reread an old magazine. Hashknife, Sleepy and Ike elected to spend their time at the corral, breaking a pair of colts, while Big Medicine, Musical and Cleve saddled their horses and rode into the hills toward the border.

Wanna finished her work in the house and came outside, where Jack huddled in his chair and looked out across the hills. He smiled at her preoccupied expression and motioned for her to sit down beside him. She came closer, but did not sit down.

"What's the matter, little girl?" he asked.

"I don't know."

Wanna shook her head.

"I know." He laughed softly. "You're getting tired of living out here in the wilderness. I don't blame you. I think I'll go away about tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" she asked quickly. "You going away?"

"Well—" he smiled crookedly— "I can't stay here any longer. Your father don't like me, Wanna."

"Why?"

"I don't know. He don't want me to talk to you."

"Don't he?"

Wanna turned and started for the door.

"Here!" he called to her. "Where are you going, Wanna?"

"I'm going away."

"Can you beat that?" wondered Jack aloud, addressing the wide world. "Come back here, you foolish girl. Your father can't expect to keep you from talking, can he? Come back and sit down."

Wanna stopped, but did not come back.

"Why don't my father want you to talk to me?" she asked.

"Oh, gosh, I don't know. What do we care? Come back here and I'll talk to you about San Francisco. Come on, Wanna. Your father won't be back for several hours, so it will be all right."

Wanna went slowly back. She did not want to disobey her father, but she did want to hear more of the wonders of the outside world. Finally she sat down beside Jack, forgetful of everything, except his word pictures of the places outside Hawk Hole.

Lucy came to the kitchen door, where she could hear the soft drone of voices from around the corner. She listened for several moments before going to the corner, where she could see Wanna and Jack, sitting close together, talking in undertones.

"Wanna!" said Lucy sharply.

The girl sprang to her feet and turned to look at her mother.

"Come, Wanna," said Lucy.

Wanna looked quickly at Jack, who threw his old magazine aside in disgust. Wanna went slowly to her mother, who motioned for her to go into the house. Jack turned and scowled at Lucy, his eyes snapping with anger.

"You, too, eh?" he snapped. "What harm is there for me to talk to the poor ignorant kid?"

"Big Medicine say no," said Lucy calmly. "You know that."

"Oh, all right!" disgustedly. "I'm about through with this place."

"You all through," said Lucy stolidly.

She turned and went down to the corral, where she called to Ike. He threw down his rope and came to her.

"You hitch up team," she said. "You take Jack Hill to town."

"All right," nodded Ike. "All well now, eh?"

"Too —— well," said Lucy inelegantly, and went back to the house, where she confronted Jack again.

"You git ready," she said. "You go away right now."

"All right." He got to his feet and started for the house. "I'm —— good and ready to go, you bet. I never was as sour on any place in my life."

"This place sour for you now, you bet," said Lucy.

He whirled and glowered at her.

"I'll remember this," he told her.

Sleepy was coming up from the corral, but neither of them noticed him.

"Some day I'll show Big Medicine Hawkworth where to head in—and the rest of you."

"Me included?" asked Sleepy.

Jack turned his head. This was not so good. He turned to enter the house, but Sleepy stopped him.

"Thank the lady for what she's done for you," ordered Sleepy.

"I will, like ——!"

"I only ask once," said Sleepy warningly. "I hate to hit a cripple, but if you don't thank Mrs. Hawkworth for takin' care of you, I'll make you an invalid for the rest of your life—you dirty, low-down cur."

Sleepy was close to Jack, and coming closer. Instead of complying with Sleepy's order, Jack reached inside his coat. Sleepy dived into him, slamming him back against the door jamb, while he almost twisted Jack's right arm out of the socket in order to force him to drop a small, pearl-handled revolver, which he had drawn from an inside pocket.

Sleepy flung him aside and kicked the gun out into the yard.

"Baby had a pretty tooth, didn't he?" mocked Sleepy. "Now, you cross between a polecat and another one, thank the lady."

Jack shrank back against the wall, panting with anger, while Sleepy waited for him to regain his breath. Then Jack thanked Lucy for her kindness to him. It was the only way out. He knew that Sleepy would make good his threat, and Jack felt that a live coward was worth several dead heroes.

Hashknife and Ike were coming up with the wagon, so Sleepy let Jack go in to pack up his few belongings. Hashknife picked up Jack's revolver and looked at it curiously.

"Shook it out of little 'Slick-Hair,' " said Sleepy. "He didn't want to thank Mrs. Hawkworth. Got real huffy and drawed his prize pea-shooter."

"Uh-huh."

Hashknife sniffed at the caliber of the gun and tossed it aside as something unclean.

"Gimme that," said Ike seriously. "I'll have a pin put on it and wear it in my necktie."

"Too gaudy." Hashknife shook his head. "Smells of beauty powder."

Jack came out and climbed into the wagon, as Hashknife picked up the gun and examined it again.

"Whatcha lookin' for?" asked Ike.

"I'm lookin' for the manicure scissors in this darned thing."

Jack growled a soft oath, and Ike spoke excitedly to Hashknife.

"He says there ain't none in it, Hashknife.

It's a per-fume bottle. Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Ike kicked off the brake and they started for town. Lucy smiled at Sleepy and held out her hand.

"*Mahse,*" she said softly.

Sleepy shook hands with her thoughtfully. Then——

"*Kiwa teahwit,*" he said.

It was the only Chinook he could remember, in response to her "Thank you."

He turned to Hashknife.

"Ain't we goin' to town, too?" he asked.

"Yeah," laughed Hashknife. "C'mon old bowlegs."

AFTER the border officers left the Tumbling H ranch, no wiser than before they came, they overtook Lon Pelly, the sheriff, and Cloudy Day, who were heading for Pinnacle. Pelly had not been able to find enough poker players in Caliente, so he made it appear that urgent business called him to Pinnacle.

McGurk and Pelly were old friends, and, both of them being officers of the law, it was perfectly natural that McGurk would tell Pelly about their chase and disappointment. Pelly was both amused and sympathetic.

"Does look kinda funny," admitted Pelly. "Still there's lots of queer things happen in this neck of the woods, Mac. I've got so I don't believe anythin' I hear, and only half what I see."

"And that's about fifty per cent. more than I do," said McGurk. "Maybe that pack horse didn't have nothin' on but the empty sacks. Maybe somebody just didn't want us to see who they were. There's a lot of maybes about it, Lon, but somethin' tells me that the pack sacks were loaded, and that somebody shifted the cargo on us."

"You'll get a lot of gray hairs worryin' about it," laughed Pelly. "I'd rather set back of some reds, whites and blues on a green covered table than to pack the red, white and blue along that —— border. I could be knowed as a —— of a good sheriff, and die young."

"I guess that's right," grinned McGurk. "But either one is a good game when yuh win. I had a good hand last night, but somebody stole all the aces."

The revenue officers rode straight through Pinnacle, but the sheriff and deputy tied their horses at the Greenback rack and went into the saloon. The sheriff lost no time in getting a seat in a poker game, while Cloudy proceeded to regale his insides with his favorite beverage, which carried a high percentage of alcohol.

Baldy Kern, Three Finger Kohler and Jack Baum rode in from the K-10. Baldy's wrist was heavily bandaged, and he wore his holster on the left side, which proved that Baldy was ambidextrous—or tried to be. Kohler explained that his cheek was cut from accidental contact with a barbed-wire, which cut it did not resemble in the least.

Cloudy was fairly well "organized" when the K-10 outfit rode in, and they were not averse to helping him imbibe a few more. Cloudy's sense of humor grew greater with each successive drink, so it was not long before he laughed aloud at what McGurk had told them.

"What's funny?" asked Kohler.

"A revenue officer chasin' a empty pack horse."

"Empty pack horse?" queried Baldy.

"Yuh know what I mean—empty pack sacks."

Cloudy was almost crying with alcoholic mirth.

"Chasin' it where?" demanded Kohler.

Cloudy wiped his eyes on his sleeve and explained as well as he could what McGurk had told them. He drew diagrams in the air with both hands, and otherwise illustrated how McGurk, Whaley and Burns had chased three riders and one pack animal almost all the way from the border to the Tumbling H ranch.

He dilated on the fact that the pack horse had been left at the ranch, and how the officers, suspecting such a thing, had come back in time to capture the horse, but lost the man who was taking it away. And then he leaned against the bar and sobbed out the fact that the pack horse carried nothing but empty pack sacks.

Baldy, Kohler and Baum laughed with Cloudy. They slapped him on the back and bought more liquor. Jim Reed came in from the Greenhorn country and joined them. Of course Cloudy had to tell the story all over again, with certain variations, and Jim Reed laughed.

Faro Lanning came from his private room at the rear of the building, and Cloudy felt obliged to tell the story to Faro. By this time his continuity was very bad, so he was prompted by Baldy, Kohler, Baum and Reed, who knew the story probably better than Cloudy did.

Faro listened attentively and joined in the inevitable laugh at the expense of the revenue officers. In fact the story went over so well that Cloudy wanted to hire a hall and charge a nominal admission. He was serious. So was Baldy.

The story meant much to Baldy. He knew that some outfit had got wind of their crossing with the big cargo, and had hijacked them out of it. He felt sure that the officers had heard the shooting and had run into the men who had ambushed him. But he was at a loss to understand who had removed the cargo from the pack animal.

He wondered if Big Medicine and his men were this outfit. It looked very much as if they had pulled the trick.

"Could it be that Torres is in with the Tumblin' H outfit, and they killed Blair to keep him from tellin' somethin'?" he asked himself.

It looked plausible. Anyway, it was worth thinking over.

A little later Ike Marsh drove in, bringing the disgruntled Jack Hill to town, and Jack Baum, looking from the saloon window, saw them stop in front of the hotel, where the stranger got out and went inside. Ike drove to a hitch rack and tied the team.

Before he left the rack, Hashknife and Sleepy rode in and tied their horses at the same rack. Baum lost no time in telling Baldy about it.

"The young feller seemed to walk pretty good," said Jack.

"Probably quittin' the ranch," said Baldy. "I've got to see him as soon as I can. Yuh never can tell what he knows about that —— layout at the Tumblin' H."

"What about these three punchers?" asked Baum. "We owe 'em somethin' for that other deal, Baldy."

"Not yet," cautioned Baldy. "Sing small just now. We don't care what they think, *sabe?*"

The three cowboys from the Tumbling H came in and almost bumped into the three from the K-10. It was their first meeting since the escape of Torres, but Baldy did not seem to hold any grievance. He grinned at Hashknife and invited them all to have a drink.

"How's the wrist?" asked Hashknife, after they had accepted the invitation.

"Pretty good," replied Baldy. "Healin' up fine. How's things at the Tumblin' H?"

"All right. Hello, Cloudy."

Cloudy Day recovered sufficiently to realize that these men had not heard his side-splitting tale, so he proceeded to tell it incoherently. Baldy watched Hashknife's face closely, while Cloudy managed to mumble out the main details, but the tall cowboy's expression told him nothing.

"Sounds all right," grinned Hashknife, after Cloudy subsided. "But what does he mean about the stuff bein' left at the Tumblin' H?"

"Search me," said Baldy. "All I know about it is what he's been tellin'. Wasn't the revenue officers out there?"

"Sure they was. They searched the ranch from top to bottom, while we sat around and wondered what it was all about."

"Somebody havin' a pipe dream," smiled Baldy. "Ever' once in a while them revenue officers do things like that."

"Always tryin' to put the deadwood on somebody," declared Jim Reed, who had moved in close to hear the discussion.

Hashknife looked at Jim Reed, and a grin widened his mouth.

"The last time I seen you," said Hashknife, "you was comin' out of Hawkworth's house on yore ear."

Reed flushed angrily, started a denial, thought better of it and moved away. He did not care to discuss such a painful affair, and had hoped that no one would ever know that Big Medicine had thrown him out.

"I thought that him and Hawkworth were good friends," said Baldy.

"I dunno anythin' about it, except that he came out on his ear. Mebbe that's a mark of friendship in this country."

"Not hardly," grinned Baldy. "Mebbe Jim Reed was tryin' to sell Hawkworth some minin' property. I see yuh brought the young feller back with yuh. Is he all right again?"

"Able to take care of himself," said Hashknife. "He don't weigh very heavy, as a man, Kern."

"Didja find out what he's doin' here, or what he intended to do here?"

Hashknife shook his head.

"No, he didn't say. He's an ungrateful young pup, I know that much about him. Mrs. Hawkworth nursed him all this time, took care of him every minute, and he swore at her when he left. If his body was

heavy enough to break his neck, he'd probably been hung long ago."

Baldy grinned at Hashknife's opinion of Meline's son, whether he agreed with Hashknife or not. Baldy sat down at one of the games and Hashknife drifted away to join Sleepy and Ike. None of them wanted to gamble nor drink, and Pinnacle held little else to amuse them, so they decided to go home.

BALDY waited until the three men had gone back to the Tumbling H, before leaving the game to go to the hotel. He found Jack in the little office, moodily reading an old newspaper and smoking. The office was empty, except for the young man, so Baldy lost no time in opening the conversation.

"Yo're Doc Meline's son, ain't yuh?" he asked softly.

Jack looked up quickly and considered this hard-faced cow-puncher, but did not reply.

"Thassall right," grinned Baldy. "Yore old man is out at the K-10."

"My father?"

"Yeah."

"What in —— is he doing out there?" demanded Jack.

"Well, he ain't askin' fool questions," retorted Baldy. "I'll pick yuh up after dark tonight. Be down at the other end of town about eight o'clock, will yuh?"

"Who are you?" asked Jack curiously.

"Baldy Kern."

"Oh. Eight o'clock, eh? I'll be there."

Baldy whirled on his heel and went out. In front of the Greenback he met Kohler.

"Didja see the son and heir?" grinned Kohler.

"Yeah, I seen him," growled Baldy.

"What kind of a rooster is he, Baldy?"

"He's fine." Baldy wrinkled his nose disgustedly. "Too —— bad that holdup jigger was such a bad shot. I hope Meline takes his —— offspring home with him, before somebody kills him."

Jack Baum joined them and they headed for the K-10. Baldy was anxious to tell Meline what he had heard about the lost cargo, and to see what plans they might formulate to recover it. Considering the fact that it was worth a fortune, Baldy was willing to make an effort to recover those lost packages.

Doctor Meline was anxiously waiting for news, and Baldy was in a position to deliver it. Meline listened to Baldy's narrative, as told by Cloudy Day, and jumped at conclusions.

"The Tumbling H did the job," he declared. "Torres is in with them. They headed straight for the Tumbling H, where they shook off the pursuit and left the cargo, which was removed by some one at the ranch.

"Possibly it was done by those new cowboys. They were probably in cahoots with the men who robbed the stage that night. Anyway, that cargo is at the Tumbling H. They will keep it hidden until the affair has died down, unless we get it."

Baldy told Meline about his son and of their agreement to meet at eight o'clock. The arrangement seemed to please Meline greatly.

"Jack might know more than we do about it," said Meline. "He is no fool, that boy."

"Ain't he?" asked Baldy innocently.

"He is not," declared Meline warmly. "In fact he knows as much about this deal as I do. He's game, too. Nobody heard him crying for assistance, did they? Kept his mouth shut, didn't he? Nobody knows who he is. Calls himself Jack Hill." Meline laughed softly. "Jack's all right, you bet. I trained him myself."

"All right," Baldy spoke disgustedly. "I'd hate like —— to have you train anythin' for me."

"You are entitled to your private opinion," said Meline coldly.

"I hope so," smiled Baldy. "What are we goin' to do about that stuff at the Tumbling H?"

"Wait until we talk with Jack. If we make a foolish move, it might ruin our chances for any further work; and the game is too good right now for us to take a chance. I'd like to have a talk with Lee Yung. He might have some good ideas, Kern."

"—— slant eye!" grunted Baldy.

"He's a square shooter, Kern."

"Aw, I suppose he is. I just don't like the breed."

Meline walked the length of the room, thinking deeply, while Baldy sat on the edge of the table, indolently smoking a cigaret. Meline halted near him and cleared his throat.

"Kern, I don't like your attitude," he said coldly. "You take exceptions to

everything. I am at the head of this outfit. This ranch belongs to me. Lee Yung is my partner in everything, and I trust him implicitly. We pay you and your men well for everything you do, and you must remember that we can always hire men to take your places."

"Is that so?" Baldy laughed and shook his head. "No, yuh can't, Doc. You'd have to bring strangers down here and teach 'em the border. The revenue officers would watch 'em like hawks. Eventually yuh might put it over, but not for a long time. And in the meantime—" Baldy laughed softly—"we might not be idle. Yuh see, Doc, we know the tricks of the trade."

Meline scowled heavily, but was forced to admit that Baldy had the better of the argument.

"We can't afford to quarrel," declared Meline, anxious to square matters. "We'll wait for Jack. I wonder if you could get Lee Yung to come back with you."

"I can try," agreed Baldy. "We've got to figure this thing out some way, and if Lee Yung can plan as well as he can play poker, he's a wizard."

HASHKNIFE was just a little worried over the way things had worked out. Cloudy Day's story spread the news, and Hashknife felt sure that the interested parties would suspect that the contraband was hidden on the Tumbling H.

He was not familiar enough with the stuff even to estimate its value, but felt that it was worth a good many dollars, if handled in the right way. And he was also sure that its original owners would leave no stone unturned to recover it. As far as the cargo itself was concerned he did not think they would be able to uncover it, but he was afraid of what they might do to some of the Tumbling H people.

Hashknife had never studied the smuggling game, but he knew that the smugglers were as desperate as rustlers or outlaws of any other description.

Big Medicine did not comment on the fact that their star invalid was missing. Lucy had explained why she had sent him to town—which Big Medicine had told her to do, in case he talked with Wanna again—and the explanation was satisfactory to Big Medicine.

Wanna said nothing. She did not understand why Jack had been sent from the ranch. Hashknife was curious to find out her opinion, but she shook her head sadly and went about her work.

Big Medicine and Hashknife spent the evening on the front steps of the ranch house, smoking and talking about Hawk Hole. In an offhand way Hashknife mentioned Jim Reed.

"Did you see him today?" asked Big Medicine.

"Yeah," smiled Hashknife. "I mentioned the fact that you threw him out on his ear."

Big Medicine smoked slowly, thoughtfully.

"He used to come out here real often," he said. "I liked him. Jim owned a mine back in the Greenhorns, and I was going to buy a half interest. I had seen it and tested the ore. That package which was stolen from the stage was the money to buy a half interest in that mine, Hartley.

"It looked like a good proposition to me. I was to take half interest, and between us we were going to put up a stamp mill. Jim was to come out, fix up the papers and then leave for the outside to buy the machinery. I was leaving it all to him.

"The day before the money was due, I met a prospector from the Greenhorns," Big Medicine knocked the dottle from his pipe and began filling it again.

"From that prospector I learned that Jim Reed never owned a mine. He was merely showing me another man's property, going to sell me a half interest in something he did not own. And he was going to take my money, leave me a worthless piece of paper and never come back to Hawk Hole again.

"He came out here to complete the deal, and I told him what I had learned. He denied it all, of course. In fact he became indignant, slapped his paper on the table and demanded that I keep my end of the bargain. I kept it, by throwing him out. That is the last I have ever seen of Jim Reed."

"What about the paper?" asked Hashknife anxiously. "Didja see it?"

Big Medicine laughed shortly.

"I kept it, Hartley. It was just several sheets of blank paper, folded together."

Hashknife laughed softly and began rolling another smoke.

"I have a suspicion that Jim Reed is crooked," he said.

"Everything points that way," admitted Big Medicine.

The talk drifted to things along the border and Hashknife asked him if he knew Steve Guadalupe.

"I have only seen him once," said Big Medicine. "Guadelupe is afraid to cross the border. It is five years since he was on this side—at least, openly. He hates the whites, but they say he will do anything for gold.

"He's a small man, Hartley. Steve Guadelupe is not much over five feet tall, but inside his dirty brain is all the deviltry, cunning and avarice of the low-bred Mexican and Yaqui combined.

"The Rancho Sierra is isolated; an ideal place for him to offer as a hangout for every type of outlaw. The Mexican government is too busy with its own troubles to bother with him, and he is careful to keep out of the clutches of the men on this side.

"I have no doubt that Guadalupe is in constant touch with men in this part of the country. Many of the Tumbling H cattle have gone to fill the coffers of Guadalupe, and to fill the bellys of him and his men. I would like to wring his neck."

"Might be a pious deed," agreed Hashknife. "I wonder if the K-10 lose any cattle?"

"I don't know. There is no friendship lost between the Tumbling H and the K-10, so we would not be informed of their losses."

Big Medicine did not quiz Hashknife about what had been said to the revenue officers that morning, nor was Jack Hill mentioned. They finished out their smokes and went into the house, where Musical was trying to improve on the phonograph patents.

That night Hashknife and Sleepy sat until midnight in a corner of the corral, where Sleepy shivered in the chill wind and swore in an undertone at himself for being partner to a lunatic.

Nothing happened, except for the wailing of a few wandering coyotes and the peevish hooting of an owl, far back in the dark cañon. Finally Hashknife decided that it was useless to stay longer, so they went back, crawled through the window, so as not to disturb any one, and went to bed.

"I know one thing that I wasn't sure of before," declared Sleepy, as he snuggled down into bed.

"What's that, cowboy?" asked Hashknife.

"I know," said Sleepy drowsily, "that there's two —— fools in Hawk Hole, and you're both of 'em, Hashknife."

"I wouldn't be surprized if you was right," sighed Hashknife.

AND while Hashknife lay awake, trying to puzzle out some of the mysteries of Hawk Hole, Doctor Meline, Jack Meline, Lee Yung and Baldy Kern sat in the K-10 ranch house, debating over their next move.

Jack had overheard Hashknife's conversation with McGurk, which proved to them that Hashknife knew something of the missing cargo. But Jack was unable to say whether or not the Tumbling H crew had been away from the ranch that night.

His room had been nearer the front of the house, but he thought that no one could move about in the house without making much noise, because of the creaking floors and stairs. He had heard no conversation which might connect them in any way with the hijacking.

"Hartley is our man," declared Doctor Meline. "He knows."

"And he is no fool," said Lee Yung. "I have watched him."

"And I'd like to pay him back for that deal the other night," said Baldy, indicating his bandaged wrist. "But I don't know just how to work it. Hartley is no fool, that's a cinch."

"We could force him to tell," suggested Jack.

"If we had the chance," said Lee Yung softly. "Not being a fool, he may not give us the chance. Still, one can never tell what the gods have written, and it is well to have a plan in mind, in case the gods should be kind to us."

"The gods don't mean much to me," said the practical Baldy. "Just give me a chance. To —— with the gods."

THE hired men on the Tumbling H were never overworked. Big Medicine was no slave driver, and let the cowboys plan out most of their own work. Musical opined that the corral needed a lot of repairs. He did not fancy riding around in the heat.

Cleve thought they really should investigate some of the water holes back in the hills. Ike thought that somebody ought to go to Pinnacle after the mail. Being of different minds, they let Ike go to town,

while Cleve and Musical sat down at a four-handed poker game with Hashknife and Sleepy.

None of them having much money, they "owed" the game. It was uneventful, and lasted most of the day. In fact it lasted so long that they grew disgusted with each other, and finally went out to the corral, where they saddled a steer.

Steer riding may not sound eventful, but any bronc rider will tell you that a bucking steer is harder to stick to than a bucking horse. They solemnly drew straws to select a rider, and the lot fell to Sleepy, who protested that he had been framed.

"If you're afraid—" suggested Musical.

"It ain't that," replied Sleepy. "It's the principle of the thing."

"It don't look like it had much," grinned Hashknife, looking the steer over.

It was a white-faced animal, long legged, evil eyed. Sleepy tightened his belt and spat reflectively.

"Somebody pick out a soft place for him to land," said Cleve, snubbing a rope around his hip. "If yuh find yourself goin' plumb out of the State, Sleepy, cut the cinch. That saddle belongs to me."

"Yore saddle don't mean nothin' to me," grunted Sleepy. "Such things are below me, cowboy."

They had the steer snubbed close to a post, and held it until Sleepy had adjusted himself in the saddle. Musical kicked open the gate, while Hashknife slacked the rope enough to slip it off.

Then the three cowboys raced for the corral fence, where they perched on the top pole and hugged their knees.

For several moments the steer stood still, its back humped, its nose close to the ground. Then it bawled shudderingly, a deep-toned wail, as though the sins of the world might be weighing upon its mind.

And then it moved so suddenly that Sleepy was almost unseated. Once around that dusty corral went the gyrating steer, lunging against the sides of the corral, bucking in its own peculiar, side-wheel way, and finally headed out through the open gateway.

Big Medicine and Lucy were on the front steps, watching the fun. Perhaps the steer had never done any bucking before, but it was wise, resourceful and very wicked. So it picked out Big Medicine and Lucy as being part and parcel to this ignominy, and headed for them, still bucking and bawling.

Big Medicine and Lucy beat a retreat inside the doorway, while the steer sheered off slightly, just as a horse and rider came around the corner. It was McGurk, the revenue officer, who had ridden up unobserved from that side of the ranch house, and had moved into view right in the path of the bucking steer.

McGurk and his horse were not a dozen feet away from the bucking steer, which was also covering distance at a rapid rate, and running blind, with its head nosing the dirt. And almost before McGurk could realize what was going on Sleepy threw up both hands, collided with McGurk and was knocked backwards into a stunted rose bush, when the steer elected to go under McGurk's mount.

The impact was so great that the big steer lifted the horse off its feet, dumping McGurk out of the saddle, and upended the frightened horse on its head, while the steer, minus the saddle, the cinch of which had snapped at the impact, went bawling into the hills.

Hashknife, Cleve and Musical came running from the corral, while McGurk's horse got to its feet and trotted in a circle, as if undecided which way to go.

McGurk got to his feet, spitting sand and profanity, while Sleepy, his feet elevated in the rose bush, looked up at them with a vacant stare and tried to argue with them over the climate of Puget Sound.

"He's all right," grinned Hashknife. "That wallop knocked him back one season, but he'll catch up."

"McGurk, you picked a bad time to come around that corner," said Big Medicine seriously.

McGurk rubbed the back of his head and sat down on the steps.

"I didn't have a chance," he explained. "That —— steer was into me like a shot."

Sleepy was sitting up now, and Musical began singing softly:

"To-o-o-re-e-e-e-adore, don't spit on the floor; use the cuspidor, what do yuh think it's fo-o-o-er?"

"You think yo're —— smart, don'tcha?" wailed Sleepy. "My ——, how did I know that London Bridge was fallin' down?"

"Serves yuh right," declared Hashknife. "You knowed danged well it wasn't the right thing to do, Sleepy. Every time yuh do wrong, yo're goin' to run into the law."

"Yeah, run into the law," complained McGurk, twisting his head to find out if it was still movable. "He sure ran into me. One of my legs is inches longer than it was, and my head popped when it hit that dirt."

McGurk got to his feet and walked over to his horse, which was being held by the grinning Cleve.

"Don't run away," said Big Medicine. "Supper is almost ready, and we'd like to have you eat with us."

"Well, I dunno," McGurk squinted at the setting sun and handed the rope back to Cleve. "I suppose I might as well, thanks. A little settin' down won't hurt me none. By grab, I sure shook myself a while ago."

"I'm sorry I shucked yuh loose," grinned Sleepy painfully. "But yuh see, my steer wasn't no hurdle racer. I had a-plenty. Hereafter I may eat it, but I'll be darned if I ride it."

"Yuh made a good ride," complimented Musical. "Ain't many riders in this country that'll stick as long as you did. I'm glad I didn't get the short straw."

"That's the straw that almost broke several backs," said Hashknife.

They were just starting in to supper when Ike came into sight, riding furiously. He drew up his horse at the steps and spat out his information in one word—

"Rustlers!"

CLEVE and Musical did not wait for any further information, but raced for the stable.

"Where are they?" asked Big Medicine anxiously.

"They cut the Greenhorn road near Smoky Cañon," panted Ike. "Olsen had been to Greenhorn and seen 'em on his way back. He said he couldn't swear that it was Tumbling H cattle, but there ain't no other brand in that range."

"Heading for the border?" asked McGurk.

"Yeah."

Hashknife and Sleepy raced for the stable, while Big Medicine went into the house. They saddled Big Medicine's horse and joined him at the front steps, where he was examining three rifles. It was not more than ten minutes after Ike's arrival until the seven men were riding away from the ranch house, while a hot supper went to waste.

They swung to the west of Pinnacle and struck the road near where the three men and the packed horse had left it. About half-way to the summit the road branched. Big Medicine drew up for a consultation. It was about three miles from there to where the road swung in around the head of Smoky Cañon.

"What's the best bet?" asked Hashknife.

"There's no use going to Smoky Cañon," declared Big Medicine. "The cattle were passing there, and must be a long ways from there now. Unless I'm mistaken, they are heading for the border near the Rancho Sierra."

"Then let's try and cut them off," suggested McGurk.

They spurred on over the hill, following the old road. Darkness came down before they reached the border, and they rode slowly, listening for sounds of the herd.

"How big was the bunch of cattle?" asked Cleve.

"He didn't say," replied Ike. "He just said it was a big bunch."

Big Medicine swore at the darkness as they moved along. Unless they ran into the herd there was no chance of finding them. It would be several hours before moonlight, and there was a possibility of the rustlers being able to cross the border in the dark.

Mile after mile they followed the border, working westward, but they saw no cattle. It was too dark for them to detect the trail of a big herd, even if the cattle left tracks on that hard ground. They swung back, working slowly and passed the point where they had come down.

Midnight came and found them still hunting. It was moonlight now, but they were little better off.

"It's no use," declared Big Medicine. "They've got all the best of it, so I'll have to swallow the dose and go home."

"Kinda looks like it," agreed McGurk. "I'll get the boys out early in the mornin' and swing down this way. Goodnight."

He rode away toward the west, while the Tumbling H crew, disgustedly turned their weary horses and went back toward Hawk Hole.

"It is some of Torres' work," declared Big Medicine. "If I ever get a chance I'll break his neck. He thinks he is safe in running my cattle across to the Rancho Sierra, but some day I'll go down there and make him pay for every head he stole."

"You'll have company," said Ike glumly. "I've always wanted to go down there and whip me some Mexicans."

"They're not all bad, are they?" asked Sleepy.

"Not at all," replied Big Medicine. "There are some mighty good men in Mexico—lots of 'em. I suppose they average as well as any other race, but the types which frequent the border are the scum of both sides. A bad Mexican is a terror, but a bad white man is worse. We've got 'em both down here."

They swung down into the valley in sight of the lights of Pinnacle and turned to the left, following about the same trail as that taken by the chase two nights before.

There were no lights in the ranch house. They stabled their horses, after Big Medicine had gone into the house, and were halfway to the house when Big Medicine called to them.

Wanna and her mother were not at the ranch house, which had been ransacked from top to bottom. The rooms were strewn with everything, and boards had been pried up from both living room and kitchen floors.

"There has been no rustling," said Big Medicine weakly. "It was a ruse to get us away from the ranch."

"But where are the women?" asked Ike.

"They are not here," said Big Medicine hoarsely.

He was holding the lamp in one of his big hands, which trembled nervously.

"But—but why were they taken?" faltered Musical. "Who would take them away, Big Medicine?"

The big man shook his head and went from room to room, with the five cowboys following him. Everything indicated that the searchers had left nothing untouched. The drawers of an old dresser in Big Medicine's room had been emptied in a pile and the drawers thrown aside. The bedding was strewn widely and even the pictures were torn down and kicked aside.

They came back to the living room and sat down, silently wondering who had done this thing. Big Medicine did not rave nor curse. He only wondered in a painful way. Hashknife alone knew that the work had been done by the men who had lost that valuable cargo of drugs, and he felt responsible for Big Medicine's loss.

"What can we do?" wondered Cleve aloud. "There's no use in runnin' around."

"No use." Big Medicine shook his head. "They probably saw us ride away, and it gave them plenty of time."

His big hands clenched convulsively, and Hashknife wondered how long the ordinary man would live in the clutches of Big Medicine in his present frame of mind.

"No use," echoed Musical.

He got to his feet and crossed to the phonograph. The record case had been emptied, the records smashed. He picked up two pieces, which fitted together, and looked them over before holding them out for inspection.

"They sure knocked —— out of 'The Holy City,' " he said.

No one even smiled. Musical did not mean to be funny. He placed the pieces tenderly on the table, his eyes saddened as he looked at them.

"I sure liked that piece," he said simply.

"I know you did, Musical," said Big Medicine.

It seemed as if he had forgotten his own troubles to sympathize with Musical.

"Do yuh think that Torres done this?" queried Hashknife.

"I don't know," said Big Medicine.

"But what did they expect to find in here?" asked Cleve. "I don't *sabe* why they tore everythin' to pieces like this."

"Money," said Big Medicine. "They thought I kept it hidden, I suppose."

Hashknife wondered if some one had been looking for money. If that was it, he felt better about it. He decided to keep quiet about the hidden drugs, and see how things would work out.

IT WAS a long wait until daylight, but they realized that nothing could be done in the dark. They breakfasted on a pot of coffee, mounted their horses and headed for Pinnacle.

"What's our first move?" asked Hashknife.

"I don't know," replied Big Medicine. "I want to find Olsen and choke the truth out of him. Perhaps he did not lie, but it sounds like a scheme to get us away from the ranch."

They dismounted in town and went on a hunt for Olsen. The town was hardly awake, but they found that Olsen had not been there that night. They did not spread the news of what had taken place at the Tumbling H, because they knew it would do no good.

From a man at the Greenback saloon they found that the sheriff and deputy were asleep at the hotel, after a night of poker. Hashknife mentioned Lee Yung, but the man had not seen him. They realized that they had not eaten a meal since noon of the previous day; so they went into a restaurant and had a meal.

The proprietor remembered that Jim Reed had been there with Olsen about six o'clock the night before, and they had gone away together. The proprietor remembered Hashknife as the man who had ducked Torres in the blacksmith's slack tub, and told him that he had seen Torres the evening before.

"What was he doin' here?" asked Hashknife.

"He wasn't in here. I live out back of town a little ways, and I took some stuff out to the house about supper time. Torres rode past just after I got to the house. I guess he didn't stay, 'cause I didn't see him again."

They paid their checks and went outside.

"Olsen and Reed together," said Big Medicine. "Torres passes here about the right time. Torres is our man."

"And Olsen and Reed are in with him." Thus Ike vehemently.

"Wait a minute," said Hashknife. "I want to find out somethin'."

He hurried across the street and into the hotel, where he found the proprietor scrubbing out the office.

"Is that young Jack Hill here yet?" asked Hashknife.

The man wrung out his mop, spat reflectively and shook his head.

"Nawsir, he ain't. Engaged a room and never used it. Walked out of here the night he came, and I ain't seen hide nor hair of his since."

"Don't know where he went, do yuh?"

The man scratched his head and leaned the mop handle against his hip.

"No. Ike Marsh unloaded him here, yuh remember? Little later on I hears voices down here. So down I comes and sees Baldy Kern jist goin' away. I asks the young feller what Baldy wanted, but he don't seem to know who I mean. But at that, I reckon Baldy was a-talkin' to him."

Hashknife thanked him for the information and went back to the hitch rack where the rest were waiting.

"We've decided to cross the border and visit the Rancho Sierra," declared Ike jubilantly. "Here's where I git me a Mexican. C'mon."

"Just a moment," begged Hashknife, and turned to Big Medicine. "Don't do anythin' rash until we have to, Hawkworth. There's a few things I'd like to look into first. For instance, I think that me and Sleepy will take a little ride out to the K-10."

"To the K-10? What is the idea, Hartley?"

"To satisfy my curiosity. They haven't anythin' against me and Sleepy, so we'll go out and have a talk with Baldy. Just kinda drop in, tell him about the rustlin', and advise him to keep his eyes open, *sabe?*"

"And what will we do all this time?" asked Musical. "I'm honin' to make somebody pay for this deal."

"Wait here," suggested Hashknife. "You may hear somethin' that will help us out a lot. We'll make the trip as fast as we can."

Big Medicine nodded doubtfully. He was anxious to head for the Rancho Sierra, but was willing to listen to reason.

"That's fine," grinned Hashknife. "You wait here and say nothin'. Mebbe Olsen will show up, and if he does, save me a piece of his hide. C'mon, Sleepy."

THE K-10 outfit had not decided on just what to do. Half the night had been spent in planning, but no decision had been reached. It all depended on Hashknife. Lee Yung intended to go back to Pinnacle after breakfast and stay there until there was need of his services.

It was Kohler who first saw Hashknife and Sleepy coming. They were half a mile away, and Kohler was not sure of their identity, but the sharp eyes of Jack Meline detected the horses long before the identity of the riders could be learned.

"Right into the net," grinned Baldy. "Talk about fate."

"The gods have decided," declared Lee Yung.

Jack Baum was down at the corral, so they did not call him. Kohler flattened himself against the wall near the door, a rifle in his hands, while the rest took points of vantage. Doctor Meline peered between the curtains at a front window, while Baldy stood at another—an open one—six shooter ready.

Hashknife and Sleepy dismounted and came toward the door. Jack Baum saw

them and called from the corral. They saw Sleepy stop and turn toward the corral, just as Hashknife knocked.

"Come in," said Baldy, cocking his gun.

Hashknife swung the door open and stepped half inside, blinking from the strong light outside, and before he could distinguish objects inside the room, Kohler brought the rifle barrel down across his head and Hashknife crumpled to the floor.

Sleepy heard the blow and saw Hashknife fall. The door slammed in his face and he sprang back, reaching for his gun, but Baldy fired from the open window and Sleepy went sprawling.

Jack Baum came running from the corral, stopped long enough to look down at Sleepy, and dashed into the house. Baldy whirled from the open window, holding his smoking gun, and laughed loudly.

"Got him," he said, indicating the open window.

He walked over to Hashknife and looked down at him, his face registering great satisfaction. Lee Yung was on his knees beside Hashknife, examining his head.

"Not hurt much," said the Chinaman. "He'll wake up in a few minutes."

Kohler grinned with satisfaction and stepped back to the window. His expression changed and he darted for the door, mouthing a curse. He flung open the door and stepped out, swinging up his rifle.

There was only one horse in the yard and no dead man. About two hundred yards down the road went Sleepy, riding madly toward Pinnacle. Kohler threw up his rifle and emptied the magazine in a wild attempt to drop either horse or rider, while Baldy ran out to Hashknife's tall gray and mounted hurriedly. He was going to try and overtake Sleepy.

But he reckoned without the gray, which only admitted of one master. Baldy had hardly settled in the saddle, when the gray whirled wildly and lunged into a bucking orgy that was a revelation even to those hard riders.

Baldy stayed five jumps and then went end over end, falling on his hands and knees, skinning his chin and otherwise paying well for his temerity. Baldy's gun went spinning away, while the tall gray trotted down toward the corral, holding up its head to keep from stepping on the reins.

Jack Baum helped Baldy to his feet. The boss of the K-10 looked as if he had stuck his chin against a grindstone, and his knees and hands were badly bruised. He staggered into the house and flopped into a chair, while Lee Yung brought water and towels.

"This is a —— of a mess!" wailed Baldy. "Stevens has gone back to town, and we'll have the whole —— works on our trail."

"You shot him, didn't yuh?" asked Kohler. "You said yuh did."

"I seen him fall," declared Baum. "I didn't know what it was all about. He sure fell like he was killed."

"He was a wise man," said Lee Yung. "Knowing that the odds were against him, he fell down. And we, like fools, accepted what he gave us."

"We've got to get out of here," said Meline nervously.

"We sure have," agreed Baldy. "Tie that —— fool tight and somebody bring his horse. Get plenty of ropes. For ——'s sake move fast, can'tcha? This is no time to gawp."

And while the K-10 moved swiftly, Sleepy Stevens left a screen of dust behind him, as he pounded along the road. He had felt the sting of Baldy's bullet, which had burned his neck, and had dropped flat, feeling that his complete collapse would stop further shooting.

As soon as Baum had gone inside the house, Sleepy had run to his horse, mounted and headed for town. It was not cowardice on his part. He knew that it would be impossible for him to fight that outfit single-handed, especially as they were protected by the walls of the ranch house, so he went for help.

Owing to the fact that he had escaped, he did not think that they would kill Hashknife. It might have been a different story, if they had caught both of them. Knowing that he would report against them, they might be afraid to do anything rash.

He raced into Pinnacle and found the Tumbling H men in the Greenback saloon. Without exciting too much suspicion he drew them outside and hurriedly told them what had happened. The sheriff and deputy were in a poker game, but they did not bother to enlist their services.

They mounted and rode swiftly out of town toward the K-10, while Sleepy gave the details of what had happened.

"Mebbe I'll git me a white man," gritted Musical. "Gimme one li'l chance to notch

a sight on any of that bunch. If one of them sons of guns busted that record, I'll borry his ears."

Regardless of the fact that there might be desperate men inside the K-10 buildings, the five riders spurred their horses almost to the front steps, dismounted hurriedly and smashed in the front door.

But except for a frightened Mexican cook the place was deserted. Sleepy pinned him against the wall and promised to shoot the ears off his head if he did not tell them where every one had gone, but the Mexican did not know.

Musical talked to him in his own language, but all Musical could get from him was a protestation that he knew nothing, except that they had tied a wounded man to a horse and had all ridden away. No, he did not know their direction nor destination.

They let him go and went back to their horses. The K-10 corral was empty. Sleepy leaned dejectedly against the shoulder of his horse and squinted out across the hills.

"Darn his long-legged soul," he said hoarsely, blinking into the sun. "Went and run his head right into a trap. Never did have any sense, dang him. Now he's up against a tough deal, and here I am, standin' here in the sun, like a danged galliwimpus. It kinda seems—" Sleepy hesitated. "It kinda seems that me and him have been together so long that I've let him do my thinkin'."

"Well," said Big Medicine wearily, as he swung his leg across his saddle, "it seems like a lot of things have gone wrong. I haven't the slightest idea where the K-10 outfit have gone."

"Mexico!" snapped Ike angrily.

He wanted to invade the country.

"Perhaps," nodded Big Medicine. "I suppose we may as well tell the sheriff and enlist his help."

"And have him tell us that it's all wrong to go across the border," grumbled Musical. "We don't need his help. Anyway, he's prob'ly in a big pot jist now and won't want to be bothered."

They rode slowly away from the K-10 and headed back toward Pinnacle. Sleepy humped in his saddle and pictured what he would do when he met any of that K-10 outfit. The loss of Hashknife had driven away his habitual sense of humor, and all he wanted to do was to find something or somebody to shoot at.

THE Rancho Sierra had long been the rendezvous of the *contrabandista*, a sanctuary for outlaws of every type and description for many years. Steve Guadalupe welcomed them all, took their gold freely and asked no questions.

Situated in the heart of the hills, half hidden by the overhanging bluff, against which it had been built, and commanding a view in three directions, it would be impossible of undetected approach, except at night.

The ranch house was an L-shaped, one-story adobe structure, and so weathered with age that it seemed part of the bluff, which was covered with a growth of mesquite and manzanita. South of the ranch house extended a long, low, adobe shed, surrounded on the west by a big pole corral, capable of holding many horses.

The ranch house was roomy, with thick walls, and the windows were barred, like those of a prison. The floor of adobe had been walked upon until it was flint-like in texture, and the furnishings were of the most crude construction.

In one end of the L was the kitchen, where a frowzy old Mexican, overalled, half-shirted, barefooted, cooked food in big, black kettles in an open fireplace. There was little idea of sanitation. The floor of the kitchen reeked of ancient spillings. Strings of chili peppers hung in festoons from the ceiling, a half eaten haunch of venison on the table attracted a myriad of flies, while more of the insects buzzed about the head of the half-asleep cook.

In the angle of the L, facing each other across a rough table, on which stood a bottle of mescal and two tin cups, sat Pedro Torres and Steve Guadalupe. Big Medicine's description fitted Guadalupe well.

His dirty gray hair, matted in some spots and in others standing upright like a handful of fox-tail grass, framed a thin, evil countenance, aged to the texture of dirty parchment, almost belying the brilliancy of his two little eyes, which age had failed to dim.

His mouth was wide and the lips so thin that it appeared more like a gash than a mouth. His raiment was little better than that of his cook, except that his shoulders were draped with a bright-colored *serape*, and on the index finger of his right hand he wore a huge emerald ring.

His general appearance was a direct contrast with that of the dapper Torres, who

was drinking almost too much of the potent liquor to suit Guadalupe. Guadalupe drank little. He swept the bottle off the table and shoved it inside his serape.

"*Idiota!*" he snarled.

"*Ladron!*" snapped Torres, reaching across the table, motioning for Guadalupe to return the bottle.

"You are a fool," declared Guadalupe in Spanish. "You drink so much you can not talk sense."

"The bottle," ordered Torres harshly.

Guadalupe grinned and put it back on the table.

"That is as it should be," muttered Torres, somewhat mollified. "I pay well, do I not, Steve?"

"Of that I am always sure," grinned Guadalupe. "Few men fail to pay Guadalupe. Some have failed to pay—in gold."

Torres gulped another drink and nodded vehemently.

"But they paid, eh, *compadre?* Oh, you know how, my friend. Guadalupe is no fool."

"When you say it, I wonder," grinned Guadalupe. "But I do not like your scheme, Torres. A priest is not a good thing to bring to the Rancho Sierra. None have ever entered, although there have been times when——"

Guadalupe crossed himself piously and grinned at Torres.

"Nor have I ever paid for many candles," grinned Torres. "I have never felt the need. But this is different."

"Fool!" grunted Guadalupe. "You have the girl. Marriage is only for those who are too weak to steal and keep a girl. You have stolen her. Are you afraid to hold her?"

"I fear nothing. To steal a girl is nothing. I have done it before, my friend. But—" Torres poured out a fresh drink—"I want to stand up before a priest and laugh. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I want this girl for my wife, do you understand? I want it known that she is the wife of Torres."

"Revenge, eh?" smiled Guadalupe. "To laugh at some one, you are willing to marry what you might have without marriage. Is that it, Torres?"

"That is for me to know. I am willing to pay one hundred dollars in gold, Guadalupe. Bring me a priest. Somewhere we will find some one to play the guitar, the mandolin. We will open a cask of wine, while Lopez roasts us much meat, and we will hold a marriage *fiesta* at the Rancho Sierra."

Torres staggered to his feet and slapped Guadalupe on the back.

"The first marriage in the Rancho Sierra, eh, old one? What care we for the blabbing tongues of the priests? What harm could they do to us? Send Felipe to Santa Isabella and have him bring back a mumbling priest to say his words over Torres and his bride.

"It will not take him more than a night and a day. Drink one more cup of mescal, old wolf. Warm up your cold bones. Where is Felipe, the half-wit? Call him. We waste time, and the bridegroom waits."

They drank another cup of the mescal, holding their cups high above their heads in a leering toast. Torres was getting drunk. Guadalupe flung his cup aside, upset the bottle to see if it contained any more liquor and started toward the door to call Felipe.

Lopez shuffled in swiftly from the kitchen.

"Gonzales," he said warningly.

Torres swore feelingly and leaned against the table. He did not want Gonzales to come now—Gonzales, the unprincipled pig of a ruffian, who supplied Guadalupe with the goods which were to be smuggled, Gonzales, whose mustaches reached below his chin, and who wanted to fight after the second drink of *tequila.*

Guadalupe swung open the door and blinked into the sunlight. The huge Gonzales, resplendent in a red silk shirt, the widest and tallest hat he had been able to purchase, leather breeches and heavy boots, while his waist was circled by an ornate cartridge belt, which sparkled with silver trimming and brass cartridge heads, stood near, holding a weary-looking horse.

There were two more wide-hatted Mexicans with him, also heavily armed, and two mules, packed. Felipe, the half-wit, was waiting for Gonzales to hand him the bridle reins. The air was dusty from the trampling animals.

"*Buenas dias,*" greeted Guadalupe.

"The day is good enough," replied Gonzales gruffly, as he flung his reins to the waiting Felipe and strode up to the doorway.

"Get us food and drink," he ordered.

His wide shoulders brushed the sides of the doorway as he entered.

"Food and drink you shall have," grinned

Guadalupe. "You come at a good time, Gonzales."

"Any time is good," replied Gonzales, catching sight of Torres.

He chuckled deeply in his throat and tossed his hat to the table.

"*Tequila*," he grunted. "*Tequila* first and then food. Good day, Torres."

"Good day," said Torres unevenly.

There was little friendship between them. Lopez entered, bearing several bottles of the white liquor and placed them on Gonzales' table, together with some empty cups.

Gonzales smashed the neck from a bottle across the edge of a table and poured a cupful.

"Come and drink, Torres," he ordered.

Torres came to the table and accepted a cup. He knew it would not be well to refuse Gonzales.

"What is the news?" asked Gonzales, turning to Guadalupe.

"News is never plentiful at the Rancho Sierra," replied the old Mexican. "But you come in time for our little *fiesta*. Felipe leaves at once for Santa Isabella to fetch a priest."

"*Madre de Dios!*" swore Gonzales. "And why a priest, old man? Is it that some one is dying?"

Guadalupe laughed and shook his head.

"A priest for the wedding of our Torres, Gonzales."

Gonzales threw back his head and stared at Torres, stroking his black mustaches violently.

"For the wedding of Torres, eh? Ho, ho, ho, ho! A *fiesta* for the wedding of Torres at Rancho Sierra! Now and then the —— must have his little joke. And who would marry Torres?"

Torres squirmed in his chair. He was less drunk now.

"And why not?" he demanded. "Have I not the right, Gonzales?"

"My question is not answered," reminded Gonzales. "Does he marry some flat-faced daughter of a peon or a dancing girl from the dives of the south?"

"A gringo bride," laughed Guadalupe. "She came to him across a saddle, roped, that she might not fail to be here at the wedding. And—" Guadalupe laughed softly, silently—"on another horse came the mother, also roped. Have you a musician, Gonzales?"

Gonzales roared with laughter and opened another bottle, while Torres scowled heavily and fingered the knife in his sleeve.

"A musician?" queried Gonzales, after he recovered from his fit of merriment. "I have Manuelo, who is never far from his beloved guitar. But that is of little importance. Where is the bride?"

Torres scowled and helped himself to another drink, while Guadalupe waited for him to speak. Gonzales grew impatient.

"Have you hidden her away where she may not look upon men?" he demanded. "Let us see if she is worthy of you, *ladron*."

"She is worthy of any man," grunted Torres. "Let us drink and forget the women."

But Gonzales was not to be put off. He surged to his feet and flung a broken-necked bottle at Guadalupe's head. Fortunately for Guadalupe, Gonzales' aim was very poor.

"Bring her out, Guadalupe," he ordered. "——, do I have to make my request more plain?"

Torres slumped in his chair, glowering at the bottles, while Guadalupe shuffled to the end of the room against the bluff, where he drew aside a cowhide-covered bunk, which concealed a trap door.

Flinging this back, he disappeared down a short flight of stairs. Gonzales drank gulpingly and laughed at Torres.

"So, you stole a gringo girl, eh?" he mocked. "Fool! When you go back across the line they will cut off your ears."

"Who spoke of going back?" demanded Torres. "The world is wide. Anyway—" Torres shrugged his shoulders—"what is one girl, more or less."

Gonzales' two men came in and he motioned them to sit down at another table. Garcia came in, his scowling face half concealed in the dirty serape, and sat down against the wall.

Gonzales tossed a bottle of tequila across to his men, who thanked him profusely and proceeded to empty it. Voices came from within the trap door, and a moment later Wanna Hawkworth came slowly up the ladder, closely followed by Guadalupe.

The girl was not bound now. Her wealth of blue-black hair hung in profusion about her face, which was slightly pale. Her calico dress had been badly torn, but she never looked more beautiful than standing there at the edge of the trap door, her hands

clenched at her sides, staring her hate at Torres.

Gonzales half raised from his chair as he stared at her. He had expected nothing like this. Torres reached for another bottle.

With a mighty oath, Gonzales attempted to bow and almost struck his forehead on the table. He shoved it roughly aside and went toward Wanna, who backed away.

"Let her alone," ordered Guadalupe. "She belongs to Torres."

Gonzales stopped and leered at Guadalupe.

"Belongs to Torres!" he roared. "To that?" He pointed at Torres, who was shakily pouring a drink. "*Dios!* Here is a mate for a man!"

But Gonzales did not advance farther. He seemed content for the moment merely to look at her. It was Lopez who broke the spell, as he shuffled quickly in from the kitchen.

"*Vaqueros!*" he said shrilly, pointing toward the north. "*Americano!*"

"*Diablo!*" swore Guadalupe. "Who can this be?"

He grasped Wanna by the arm, whirled her around and hurried her down the ladder, while Gonzales turned and walked drunkenly back toward the doorway, passing Torres, who had slumped at the word *Americano.* He was too drunk to flee, and he felt sure, deep in his crooked soul, that retribution had overtaken him.

GONZALES leaned in the doorway and watched the riders draw up in the yard. Baldy Kern was in the lead, and behind him came Baum, Kohler, Horan, Doctor Meline and his son. Strapped to the back of the gray horse was Hashknife Hartley, bound tightly and blindfolded.

"Hello, *compadre,*" called Gonzales, as he recognized Baldy.

"Hyah, Gonzales," laughed Baldy. "How yuh comin'?"

Another horseman came into view. It was Lee Yung. He was not much of a rider, which accounted for his slower pace. They dismounted as Guadalupe came out past Gonzales and greeted them. Lee Yung and Guadalupe were old friends, and the Chinaman spoke Spanish fluently.

"What of the prisoner?" asked Guadalupe in Spanish.

And while the rest of the cavalcade listened with little understanding, Lee Yung told Guadalupe why they had taken Hashknife Hartley prisoner. It took some little time.

"And will bringing him here give you back the stuff?" asked Guadalupe.

"Perhaps," replied Lee Yung. "There are ways of making men talk. This man knows where it is hidden. The big man over there is Doctor Meline, who disposes of what we get. The young man is his son."

"It is good," nodded Guadalupe. "Go inside."

Baldy, Kohler and Horan took the ropes off Hashknife and slid him from the saddle. He was unable to stand, unable to see through the heavy bandage; so they half carried, half dragged him into the house and propped him up in a chair.

His hat was gone, and the welt on his head showed plainly. But not a sound issued from his lips, although he was suffering tortures from returning circulation. His wrists were blue and swollen from the tight ropes, and his limbs twitched from the reaction.

"By ——, he's got nerve!" exclaimed Jack Meline admiringly.

"We'll break that," declared his father.

Baldy had caught sight of Torres, who had not moved from the table. Garcia still sat against the wall, paying no attention to the newcomers.

"So this is where you hold out, eh?" snarled Baldy. "I've been lookin' for yuh, Torres."

Baldy went closer to him, his hand resting on the butt of his gun, but Guadalupe, sensing the danger, stepped between them.

"Not here," he told Baldy in English. "This is no place to even scores. At this *rancho,* everybody is a friend. It must be that way or no one is safe."

Baldy glowered at Guadalupe for a moment, but could see the wisdom of Guadalupe's words.

"All right," he growled. "I'll catch him away from here."

"*Esta Buena,*" nodded Guadalupe. "But not here, *compadre.*"

"How's chances to get somethin' to eat?" asked Kohler.

Guadalupe nodded and went into the kitchen to give Lopez his orders, after which he went outside, shuffled around to the corral, where he instructed Felipe about going to Santa Isabella.

Baldy examined Hashknife's ropes and

removed the cloth from around his eyes.

"It won't hurt yuh none to have a look now," he grinned. "You ain't in a place where yore eyes will do yuh much good."

Hashknife blinked painfully, but said nothing. The bandage had been over his eyes since before he had regained consciousness, and the light hurt them. He shut his eyes until the stinging sensation had somewhat passed, and then looked around.

He had heard enough during the trip to know who his captors were and what they had in store for him. Gonzalez swaggered over in front of him and grinned widely.

"You like drink some *tequila?*" he asked.

Hashknife had not been long enough in the border country to know the meaning of *tequila*. Gonzales strode back to a table, poured a drink into a tin cup and held it to Hashknife's lips.

"What in —— do you want to waste good liquor for?" demanded Kohler angrily.

Hashknife gulped the big drink and thanked Gonzales with a look. Gonzales turned and scowled at Kohler.

"I pay for this *tequila*," he told Kohler. "And what I pay for I use as I like, *hombre*."

"Sure, sure!" interposed Baldy. "That's all right, Gonzales."

Gonzales drank and walked outside, where he ran into Guadalupe.

"I have just sent Felipe to Santa Isabella," said Guadalupe.

"That is good," agreed Gonzales. "But other things are not good. Torres stole this girl from Hawk Hole; these men are from Hawk Hole. There is bad blood between Torres and Kern. If they learn that these women are concealed here, it may not be good for us."

"They could gain nothing by spoiling our schemes, Gonzales."

Gonzales laughed softly and shook his head.

"Never trust a gringo," he advised. "When their own color is concerned, they do not always count the cost. In many ways they are very great fools."

"They will go back before the priest comes."

"We do not know," argued Gonzales. "They have said that this tall prisoner's friend escaped to carry the news, and Hawk Hole will be a dangerous place for them. They will torture the tall one, in order to force him to confess, but what then? By this time there are men riding toward the border, Guadalupe, my friend."

"What would you do?" asked Guadalupe anxiously.

"Ah!"

Gonzales stroked his mustaches and looked very wise.

"Torres is drunk," he declared. "The girl is worth too much to become the bride of Torres. Suppose we remove the girl in the night, my friend. By morning——"

"You would take her from Torres?"

"I have seen her," said Gonzales meaningly.

But Guadalupe shook his head quickly.

"It is a matter between you and Torres. Steve Guadalupe plays fair with all. No man can ever say that he lost by trusting me. What men do between themselves is nothing to me, but I have nothing to look back at and fear. Torres brought the girl to me, and he offers one hundred dollars in American gold for the use of a priest. I have agreed. That is my answer, Gonzales."

Gonzales tugged at his mustaches. He knew that Guadalupe would not be a party to his scheme, because it would be a case of discriminating against one of his guests.

"Suppose we leave it to the girl," he suggested.

Guadalupe laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well. And suppose she refuses either? What then?"

Gonzales patted himself on the chest and smiled widely. He was egotistical enough to think that any woman would be attracted to him, when, as a matter of fact, Wanna would probably select Torres, as being the lesser of the two evils.

Guadalupe went back to the kitchen to hurry Lopez, and Gonzales entered the house. Torres had fallen forward against the table, his face buried in his arms—dead drunk. The men from the K-10 were grouped together, talking in undertones. Hashknife sat where they had left him, tightly bound, staring out through the open door. He had spoken no word since Kohler's rifle barrel had laid him low.

Baldy left the group and came to him. Hashknife lifted his eyes and squinted at the boss of the K-10.

"Ready to talk?" asked Baldy.

"About what?" asked Hashknife weakly.

"You know —— well what about. We

want to know what yuh done with that cargo of drugs, and you'll tell us, *sabe?*"

"Will I?" Hashknife smiled, but shook his head.

"Oh, yeah, yuh will," persisted Baldy. "We're in Mexico now in a safe place. We know how to make yuh talk, Hartley, and it'll save yuh a lot of ——, if you'll speak up now."

"If yuh knew, yuh wouldn't dare go after it," said Hashknife easily. "I heard enough to know that my pardner got away, and he'll sure make life miserable for you women stealers."

"Women stealers?" said Baldy wonderingly. "What do yuh mean?"

"I reckon you know, Kern. You go back across the line and see how quick yuh get hung."

The rest of the K-10 gang moved in closer, wondering what Hashknife meant. Torres lifted his head slightly, a drunken grin on his lips. Gonzales scowled. He did not want that outfit to know about the girl.

"What woman are you talking about?" demanded Doctor Meline.

"Big Medicine Hawkworth's wife and daughter."

"Well, what about 'em?" snapped Baldy.

"You ought to know, Kern. You helped search the Tumbling H ranch house and kidnap the women."

"That's a —— lie!"

"Oh, all right."

Hashknife shut his lips tightly.

"Let's get this straight," said Jack Meline, crowding in closer. "You say that Mrs. Hawkworth and Wanna have been taken away, Hartley?"

"Who done it?" asked Baldy. "By ——, we didn't!"

Hashknife knew that they were telling the truth. In fact, he doubted that they had from the first, but wanted to be sure.

When Hashknife refused to talk any more, Baldy's eyes fastened on Torres, and he walked over to the hunched figure.

"Where's the woman and girl, Torres?" he asked.

"*Quien sabe?*" grunted Torres. "I know nothing about women."

"Why all this talk about women and girls?" asked Gonzales. "Are they your friends, Kern?"

"They are not," denied Kern. "I don't care a —— who took 'em, but I don't want the blame."

"You'll have a mighty short time to protest yore innocence, if yuh go back across the border," said Hashknife.

"Aw, shut up!" snarled Baldy. "——, yuh, you won't live to enjoy it, anyway."

"Mebbe not," Hashknife smiled softly. "Yuh never can tell. I'll die when my time comes and not before, Kern. Yore mistake was in lettin' my pardner get away. The Tumblin' H outfit were waitin' in Pinnacle for him, and I'm bettin' that most of the town is with 'em now."

"You fool!" snarled Kohler. "This is Mexico. They won't dare cross the line."

"You crossed it, didn't yuh?"

"Well, we ——"

Kohler floundered.

"Would Big Medicine care about the border?" asked Hashknife.

Doctor Meline swore viciously and turned away. Lopez was coming in with dishes of food and placing them on a long table.

Baldy walked over and sat down at the table. Meline followed and sat down beside Baldy.

"There's a lot of truth in what he says," declared the doctor. "We have made a serious mistake, Baldy. For the price of one cargo we have jeopardized our future. We can't afford to be found here."

"Well, ——, we can't go back."

"I can at least," said the doctor nervously. "No one knows that I am with you, that I ever came to Hawk Hole."

"Gettin' cold feet, eh?" sneered Baldy. "Hey! Steve! Bring us some *tequila*. My friend has a chill. C'mon and set down, the rest of yuh. What the —— are yuh all lookin' so blue about? By ——, I didn't know I was workin' with a lot of sheep."

"I'm not afraid," declared Jack Meline, "but I'd give quite a lot to be out of this —— country and on my way back to Frisco. It surely don't look good to me."

"Soak up some *tequila* and the world will look brighter."

Guadalupe was generous with his liquor, and they attacked it with a will. *Tequila* is potent liquor, and its full effect comes suddenly. Gonzales sat at the far end of the room, drinking alone, thinking deeply. His two men remained outside, each of them half asleep. Torres still appeared to sleep at the table, while Garcia still squatted

against the wall, half covered with his serape.

The *tequila* seemed to have the desired effect, and those at the long table became jovial. Even Doctor Meline forgot his fears and matched drinks with the rest of the crowd. Guadalupe sat down with them and helped drink some of his own liquor.

The liquor gave them prodigious appetites and they did justice to the simple and none too clean cooking of Lopez. No one offered Hashknife food nor drink and he asked for none.

It was growing dark now, and Lopez brought in a lighted lamp for the center of the table.

"How about stickin' a guard down the trail?" asked Baldy. "We don't want somebody runnin' in on us, Steve."

"I have none," said Guadalupe. "Felipe is gone. Perhaps I might have Lopez watch the trail."

"I send my two men," offered Gonzales, and went out to them.

"That'll make me set easier," declared Baldy. "Let's have a few more bottles, Steve. I feel like a bird tonight."

"And we have some work to do presently," said Meline, nodding toward Hashknife. "But that can wait."

SLEEPY and the men from the Tumbling H rode back to Pinnacle with the intention of enlisting the assistance of the sheriff and deputy. They realized that their force was all too small for an invasion of Mexico.

But they found Cloudy Day leaning against the Greenback bar, singing a mournful song, and too drunk to be of any use. Lon Pelly was in a poker game, also very drunk, but with all the appearance of a sober man. He left the game at Sleepy's request, and went outside while they told him what they intended to do.

They only told him that they needed his help in going to the Rancho Sierra to find some folks who had been kidnaped, but Lon was too drunk to take an interest in the matter.

"Aw, let the —— fool go back to his game!" grunted Ike. "He's only good for poker playin'."

Lon took no offense, but went back to his game.

"What did they want, Lon?" asked Faro Lanning.

"They're all crazy," declared Lon owlishly. "They want me to go to the Rancho Shierra to whip Mexico. Nawshir, not me. Whose deal?"

"Your deal," said Faro, turning and motioning to Arkansaw Jones, who was standing at the bar.

Faro got up and told Arkansaw to take charge of the game.

"I'm goin' to eat," said Faro.

He hurried out through the rear door, went out to his stable, where he saddled a horse and rode away. Judging from appearances, Faro Lanning was going quite a way to get a meal.

Sleepy and Big Medicine went to a store and purchased some rifle cartridges, while Ike, Musical and Cleve procured a few articles of food, which might be carried in their pockets or tied to a saddle.

They rode out of Pinnacle, as if heading for the Tumbling H, but changed their course toward the south as soon as they left the town. Big Medicine had not complained over his loss, but there was an expression in his eyes which boded no good to the guilty parties.

They crossed the divide and followed the old road to the border, where they struck the trail to the Rancho Sierra. There were plenty of horse tracks in the dusty trail, all pointing to the south.

"Plenty horses goin' in," observed Sleepy. "And we've got to be danged observin', gents. I understand that these folks down here get kinda careless when it comes to foolin' with another man's life."

"And I'm one of 'em, if I find the jigger that broke my phonygraft record," declared Musical. "That's what yuh might call bein' rowdyish, ain't it?"

"Aw, yuh can get another record," growled Ike.

"Thasso? Not jist like that, Ike. That singer's dead now."

"I'd 'a' bet on that," said Cleve. "No danged human could sing thataway and live."

Musical grumbled to himself something about some folks not having an ear for music, but finally dropped the subject. The trail wound in and out of the rocky, brush covered hills, where an army could hide.

Ike had ridden almost to the ranch one day, looking for stolen cattle, and had viewed the place from a rocky point, so he

was elected to guide the party to this place.

After considerable loss of time Ike finally discovered the place where he had left the trail, and they managed to reach the eminence, which was about half a mile from the ranch. They crouched in the brush and watched the ranch, but at that distance they were unable to distinguish individuals.

"Must be at least twenty horses in that corral," observed Sleepy. "If there's a man for every horse, we've got some gang to bust into."

"And a very bad place to attack," declared Big Medicine.

"Shore is," agreed Musical. "Looks like our best bet was to make our big move after dark."

Sleepy had been studying the place for several minutes, while the others discussed a possible point of attack.

"It's a risky business to butt right into that place," declared Sleepy. "We don't know a danged thing about who is there, nor what we're goin' up against. See that butte back of the house? That's where I'm goin'. I'll circle back and manage to work my way over that butte, *sabe?*

"That'll let me down pretty darned close. Mebbe I can get on their roof. Anyway, I'll scheme some way to find out what's inside that place. They won't look for anybody to come in on 'em from that side. You stay here, where yuh can see me work my way down the bluff. If nothin' happens I'll go back the same way."

"Suppose somethin' happens?" questioned Musical.

"Then it happens," grinned Sleepy. "If I don't come back, you can come ahead, but don't do it in daylight."

"All right, Stevens." Big Medicine held out his hand. "Good luck to you. If we hear any shooting, we won't wait for darkness."

"All right."

Sleepy slipped off his cartridge belt, containing rifle cartridges, and handed it to Musical, who also took charge of Sleepy's rifle. He intended to travel as light as possible.

It did not take Sleepy long to find that it was impossible to use his horse, unless he was equipped to cut a trail through the brush, so he left the horse with the others and went on. By a dint of maneuvering he was able to work his way across the hills, in and out of narrow cañons, where the mesquite threatened to make rags of all his clothes.

It took him at least an hour to gain the foot of the tall bluff, and another hour to reach the top. He was thoroughly tired out and bleeding from innumerable scratches. The ranch house was not visible, nor could he determine just which pinnacle the gang were inhabiting, so he waved his hat wildly several times, hoping that they would catch his signal.

Then he began the descent. He was about to remove his boots, thinking that it might lessen the sound of his approach, but a big rattler buzzed at him from a rubble of rocks, and he voted to keep his boots where they belonged.

Darkness follows the sunset quickly in the border country; there is no twilight worthy of the name, and the sun had set. Sleepy knew that he was getting well down the bluff, and that it behooved him to go softly. A dislodged stone would probably roll all the way to the ranch house, so Sleepy peered closely before placing his heels.

It was very brushy; dry brush, which crackled at the touch. And the light was failing very fast. Already the darkness had blotted out the pinnacle beyond.

Sleepy felt that he was near the edge of the bluff. He could smell the odors of cooking and of wood smoke. He eased his foot through a tangle of brush, tested the ground and swung his body forward.

As he brought his two feet together, something seemed to jerk the ground from under his feet and he shot downward into a hole. He seemed to be falling down an incline, fairly going end over end, the bottom of the fall ending in a blaze of glory, in which Sleepy lost all interest in things.

But just a few minutes before the Tumbling H men had reached the lookout point, Faro Lanning had ridden up to the Rancho Sierra. He had been passed by the guards, who knew him, and had told them to keep a good watch.

And he had walked into the ranch house only to find the K-10 gang making merry over their meal.

"What in —— are you doin' down here?" demanded Baldy.

"Riding around," said Lanning uneasily. "Where's Torres?"

One of the men indicated Torres, asleep at the table. Lanning shook him, but Torres merely grunted and continued to snore.

"C'mon and have drink," invited Kohler. "What the ——. We're all good fellers together."

"All right."

Lanning realized that they were all half drunk. He accepted a bottle and cup and sat down at the table.

"This is all right," said Baldy seriously, "but what are you doin' here, Faro? What's the idea?"

"I might ask the same question, if I was curious."

"Well, I am curious, Faro."

"All right."

Faro drained his cup and threw it back on the table.

"You might like to know that Big Medicine and his gang are comin' here. I heard 'em say they were. They tried to get Lon Pelly to come with 'em, but Lon was too drunk. I had a hunch that some of my friends might like to know it."

"*Esta buena!*" grunted Guadalupe. "We will welcome 'em, eh?"

"—— right!" chuckled Kohler. "Whatcha say, Gonzales?"

"We will show them the good time, *compadre.*"

"I saw the guards," offered Faro. "I warned 'em."

Faro saw Hashknife, and a grin wreathed his lips.

"He won't be much help to Hawkworth," laughed Baldy.

HASHKNIFE did not speak to Faro, and the gang went back to their drinking. Lee Yung drank little. He considered Faro Lanning thoughtfully, distrustfully. He knew that Faro had some real reason for riding down there. And he had asked for Torres.

In spite of his dangerous predicament Hashknife smiled to himself. It was evident that there were two factions, composed of the K-10 outfit on one side and Torres and Lanning on the other. He wondered who else was connected with Torres' side.

He knew now that Jack Hill was Jack Meline, and that the elder Meline was closely associated with both Lee Yung and Baldy Kern. He wondered what Sleepy and the Tumbling H gang were doing, and from the talk he had heard he knew that the K-10 outfit had nothing to do with the kidnaping of Lucy and Wanna. He was also beginning to fear that Big Medicine was wrong in thinking that the women had been taken to this ranch.

Hashknife noted with satisfaction that every one was drinking considerable liquor. Given enough time, he was sure that Sleepy and the gang would make a desperate attempt to find him. But Baldy was hardly satisfied with Faro Lanning's explanation of his appearance. Baldy was just drunk enough to be suspicious.

"You must 'a' hurried, Faro," he observed.

"I didn't lose much time," agreed Faro indifferently.

"How did yuh know yuh had friends here?"

"Guessed it."

Faro winked wisely.

"What made Big Medicine think we came here?"

"I dunno. Pass me that bottle, will yuh, Kohler? I never asked Big Medicine, 'cause I didn't talk to him. Lon told me."

"Uh-huh." Baldy glowered drunkenly. "And why did yuh ask for Torres?"

"I—I dunno," Faro faltered. "Mebbe Lon mentioned Torres."

"Very likely"

"We're all friends together," mumbled Kohler. "Whatsa use of quarrelin'? Steve, my bottle is empty."

"Just like yore head," grumbled Baldy. "We're in a —— of a fix, if yuh ask me. That —— outfit knows that we came here."

"What if they do?" Thus Horan boastingly. "We're here first."

"I have my men watching," stated Gonzales easily.

"Yeah—fine. They was half drunk when we came. ——, a railroad train could pass them two jiggers."

Baldy got up from the table and went unsteadily to the door, giving Hashknife a nasty look as he passed. The others laughed at Baldy's fears, while Guadalupe brought more liquor.

It was light enough for Baldy to distinguish objects at a distance, and as he leaned against the side of the door, two riders came around the corner of the house and drew up near the door.

One was Felipe the half-wit, and the other was unmistakably a priest. Baldy whirled, shut the door and called to Guadalupe—

"Steve, who in —— sent for a priest?"

"*Diablo!*" exploded Guadalupe. "I did not expect him so soon. Quick! Take your prisoner!"

Guadalupe ran to the corner, swung the old bunk aside and lifted the trap, while Baldy and Gonzales picked Hashknife up bodily and hurried him the length of the room. His legs were bound so he could not walk, and they lowered him swiftly to Guadalupe, after which Gonzales helped him below.

It was only a matter of a few moments before Guadalupe and Gonzales came back, closed the trap, and were ready when Felipe opened the door and admitted the priest.

The priest was a small man, with a thin face, almost chalk-like in color. He halted just inside the room and surveyed the company.

"I am Father Francisco," he announced in a monotone. "Felipe met me on the road, so I saved him the trip to Santa Isabella. He said that you had need of my services."

"Welcome, Father," said Guadalupe. "I shall have Lopez bring food and wine at once."

"Thank you, son," replied the priest.

Baldy laughed aloud. It amused him to have a priest, at least twenty years younger than Guadalupe, call him son.

"They sent for yuh, did they?" asked Baldy, addressing the priest.

"So I believe."

"Uh-huh."

Baldy squinted narrowly at Guadalupe, who turned toward the kitchen.

"Say, Stevie," he said thickly, "what's the idea of this priest comin' here? Who sent for him?"

Guadalupe hesitated for a moment before pointing at Gonzales.

"Ask Gonzales."

"*Buena*," laughed Gonzales. "I can tell you. It is to marry Gonzales that the priest comes, my friend."

"You lie!" Torres straightened up, seemingly sober and glared at Gonzales. "You lie, you *ladron!*"

Gonzales almost fell down in starting toward Torres, but Baldy blocked him.

"Hang on to yourself," advised Baldy. "Torres you set down, before I come over there and knock yuh down. Now—" he shook the massive Gonzales—"tell me about it. Let Torres alone, I tell yuh!"

"She is my woman," declared Torres. "I brought her here. That pig of a *contrabandista* would steal her from me."

"Thish is gettin' good," declared Kohler drunkenly, while the rest of his companions agreed that it was worth listening to.

"You brought her, eh?" grunted Baldy. "How about it, Gonzales?"

"I do not deny it. But he is not a man. This woman is fit to mate with a man, with me!"

"Egotist!" spat Lee Yung.

"Where is this woman?" demanded Baldy. "Who is she?"

"She is the daughter of Hawkworth," said Torres.

He did not want them to know this, but there was no way out of it.

"Hawkworth's daughter! So you stole her, eh? You poor fool! If I was Hawkworth I'd flay you and use yore hide for a saddle cover. But where is she?"

"Who knows?" laughed Gonzales. "She will be here at the wedding."

"At my wedding," corrected Torres. "I demand that I have the right to marry her. Didn't I bring both of them here!"

"Both of 'em?" wondered Baldy. "F'r ——'s sake, what's the idea of bringin' two?"

"Her mother came also."

Baldy threw back his head and laughed loudly.

"Well, he started in right, boys; he took mamma along. Now the question is, who will marry her? What'll yuh do, draw straws or roll the dice? Yuh can't fight it out. Torres is too small."

"A knife makes us even, *señor*," said Torres stiffly.

"And she'd sure have a bloody bridegroom," declared Horan. "I've seen the finish of a few knife fights. Why not leave it to the *padre?*"

"That's the stuff," agreed Baldy. "You pick the winner, old priest. Look 'em over and see which one would make the best husband for a girl."

"Not without an understanding," said the priest. "What was meant by saying that the girl was stolen?"

"Aw, that was a joke," said Kohler. "Everythin' is all right, Father Francisco."

"But has the girl no choice in the matter?"

"Well," laughed Baldy, "it kinda looks like Torres was goin' to marry her, until along comes Gonzales and smears things. If the girl wants Torres, she'll have Torres, I reckon. Hey! Steve! Bring out the

bride. We'll find out who she wants."

Guadalupe opened the trap and went down the short flight of stairs, while they opened more liquor and joked about the coming nuptials. The priest looked on gravely, wondering what he should do under the circumstances.

Lucy, the old squaw, was first up the ladder, followed closely by Wanna. Guadalupe came up behind them, but did not close the trap. Jack Meline started toward them, but his father drew him back.

"Oh, this is a rotten deal!" declared Jack hotly.

He was not so drunk that he did not realize what it meant.

"You keep out of it!" snapped the elder Meline. "It is none of your affair."

Neither of the women spoke. Lucy seemed at the verge of exhaustion, but Wanna looked at them defiantly. Her eyes rested on Jack Meline's face and she gave a start.

"You here?" she said dully.

"Yes, I'm here," he replied.

"And you keep your beak out of it," warned Baldy. "We don't need yore help."

He turned to Wanna and looked her over appraisingly.

"So yo're Big Medicine's girl, eh? Not such a bad looker, at that. What we want to know is this—" indicating Gonzales and Torres, with a sweep of his hand—"which one do yuh want?"

Wanna looked wonderingly at the two men, and shook her head.

"I don't know what you mean," she said slowly.

"Don'tcha? Well, both of 'em want to marry yuh. Which one do yuh choose? It don't make a —— bit of difference to us. Pick yore man and we'll see that the other keeps out. The priest is ready and the goose hangs high."

"Neither," said Wanna defiantly.

Baldy laughed at Gonzales and Torres.

"That's another angle," he chuckled. "It seems that the lady don't care for either of yuh. Well, I don't blame her a —— bit."

"We do not ask you to decide," reminded Torres. "This marriage has nothing to do with you, Kern."

"Thasso?" Baldy laughed. "Keep yore shirt on, Torres. There's goin' to be a marriage, and yuh can bet on that."

"There's several of us here," laughed Kohler. "Why marry her off to either one of them *Colorado Maduros*, when there's good white men to be had for the askin'?"

"Wanna," it was Jack Meline, "will you marry me?"

His answer came in a back-handed slap from his father, and he went back against the wall, bleeding at the mouth.

"Keep out of this, you fool!" roared Meline.

He was half-drunk, and caught at the corner of the table to keep his balance. Jack wiped the blood from his lips, but said nothing. He had tried to do what he considered the decent thing, as long as they intended to force marriage upon her.

"Let's pull off a raffle," suggested Kohler. "The lucky man marries the girl. How's that for an idea?"

But before Baldy could digest the idea, one of the guards fairly fell in through the doorway, with the other close behind.

"They come!" panted one of the guards. "Four riders."

"How close?" demanded Gonzales anxiously.

"Not too far. It is better to get them here than to fight in the dark. They will soon be here, because the house seems dark."

"Big Medicine and his gang!" exploded Baldy. "We'll trap 'em. Take the women into the kitchen. Leave the lamp as it is. Scatter and lie down on the floor, but keep yore guns ready. By ——, we've got 'em, boys! Make it fast."

GUADALUPE and Felipe hurried the two women into the kitchen and barred the door leading to the outside, while the others, except the priest, flung themselves on the floor, away from the rays of the lamp, and covered the doorway with their guns.

The priest moved toward the door, but was stopped by Baldy.

"Get back by the table!" snapped Baldy. "I ain't never killed no priests, but there's always a first time."

Father Francisco moved back to the table, where he stood full in the rays of the lamp, looking toward the doorway. The place was as silent as the tomb, except for the breathing of the men.

It seemed ages before there was any sound from outside. Came the soft crunch of gravel and the door was flung violently

open. Still there was no one in sight. The door creaked back a trifle. Then Big Medicine Hawkworth's huge body filled the doorway, a heavy revolver in his right hand. He squinted at the light and at the black-gowned priest, blinking slightly.

"Only a priest," he said softly. "That's queer."

He stepped inside, followed by Ike Marsh, Musical Matthews and Cleve Davis.

"A priest, eh?" said Ike nervously.

"Don't move," Baldy's voice was triumphant. "There a dozen guns on yuh right now. Put up yore hands and drop them guns."

The capture was a complete success. They realized that it was useless to resist. The men were scattered along the wall, and now the men from the Tumbling H could distinguish them and their guns.

Kohler came and collected the guns from the floor, handing them to Guadalupe for safe keeping, while the rest of the men got up and came forward. Big Medicine leaned back against the wall and looked at the well-known faces.

"Thought you'd catch us asleep, eh?" sneered Baldy. "We've been expectin' yuh."

Baldy looked them over curiously.

"Where's that —— Stevens?" he asked suddenly.

Ike Marsh laughed with relief. He was afraid that they had already captured Sleepy, who had not come back to them. Baldy scowled and repeated his question.

"Yuh might do a little guessin'," said Ike. "We always have an ace in the hole, Kern."

"Thasso? Well, yore aces won't help yuh none this time, Marsh. We've got the whole deck ag'in' yore one."

Doctor Meline had come into the lamplight, and Big Medicine was staring at him, an amazed expression on his face. He moved toward Meline, unheeding the menace of several guns.

"Hey!" snapped Baldy. "Get back there, Hawkworth!"

But Hawkworth did not seem to hear Baldy's warning. Meline stepped back and put the table between himself and Big Medicine.

"You!" said Big Medicine hoarsely. "What are you doing here?"

Doctor Meline laughed nervously.

"Man, can't you talk?" demanded Big Medicine.

"Oh, I can talk all right," said Meline.

"Then go ahead. I don't understand it."

Big Medicine swung his head and looked at the crowd, but his gaze came back to Meline.

"You are Doctor Meline?"

It was both a question and a statement.

"The notorious Doctor Meline," corrected Torres. "The biggest drug seller in the west, the crook who sent you a bundle of paper instead of money."

Big Medicine stared at Torres. Meline whirled angrily on the Mexican, but decided that it was better to face one man at a time.

"Is this true, Jim Meline?" asked Big Medicine hoarsely.

"True?" Meline laughed. "Well, if it is—what then?"

Big Medicine's right hand went to his face and he drew the back of his hand across his mouth. The lines of his face seemed to deepen.

"I trusted you, Jim," he said simply.

"You always was a fool," declared Meline. "I might as well spill it all now, Hawkworth. The money you sent me for the past twenty odd years has been well spent. It has bought me many things.

"You fool, you buried yourself down here in the hills, and gave me your money to invest. Oh, I've invested it well," Meline laughed recklessly. "I'll admit that I got quite a shock when you sent for twenty thousand dollars.

"But I sent it to you, a whole package of bogus money, and some —— fool held up the stage and stole it. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I intended for the stage to be robbed, but by a different outfit. The package was to come back to me intact, so that none would ever know what it contained."

"You did this, Jim?" Big Medicine spoke softly, sorrowfully. "We were friends once, Jim. I would have backed you with my life. In all the wide world there was no man I trusted as I did you, and you do this thing to me."

Big Medicine shook his head slowly, his lips compressed.

"I can't believe it yet, Jim. I feel that I will awake after a while and find that it is only a dream. Jim Meline, the one man I thought I could trust."

He shifted his eyes and caught sight of Jack's pale face with the smear of blood across his lips.

"You are all here," he said slowly. "Lee Yung, Torres, Jack Hill—well, what is the program? What is this priest doing here?"

Baldy laughed mockingly.

"Put four chairs against the wall and set down our guests," he ordered. "Kohler, you and Baum set over here and keep yore guns on 'em, *sabe?* Guadalupe, you bring in the bride. By ——, we'll have a marriage, if I have to be the bridgeroom myself."

Baldy turned angrily to Doctor Meline.

"So yore money package was a dummy, eh? You didn't trust us to send it back, didja, Meline? And all yore yelpin' about losin' twenty thousand dollars was only a lie! You sent that fool kid in to take it back to you."

"What is that to you?" demanded Meline hotly.

"Nothin', only yore crooked work has put us in danged bad. You ain't got no more sense than to write letters that anybody might steal."

"My crooked work?" Meline laughed. "You've got a lot of nerve to yelp about crooked work."

"I never played crooked with my own kind," retorted Baldy.

The boys began arranging the four chairs against the wall, while Guadalupe went to the kitchen, carrying the captured weapons, which he placed on the kitchen table. Felipe and Lopez had been guarding the women, but now Guadalupe signaled them to precede him into the other room.

Felipe and Lopez grinned at each other, as they drank from a jug.

"There is not much left," informed Lopez, shaking the jug.

"Then hide it," said Felipe, who was a half-wit.

Lopez unbarred the kitchen door and placed the jug outside, after which he shut the door and went into the other room.

SLEEPY had no idea of where he was nor how long he had been there when he awoke in the dark. His head was splitting and he felt that most of his body had been hammered to a pulp. He had a painful scalp wound, which he examined with his fingertips, and one of his eyes was almost swelled shut.

Investigation showed that in spite of his fall, his six shooter was still in its holster. For several minutes he lay quiet, trying to remember just what had happened to him.

"Fell into a —— old prospect hole, I suppose," he told himself disgustedly."

But it was a big prospect hole, he decided, after trying to reach the walls. Twisting his gaze upward he got a glimpse of the sky, a starry circle some distance above him.

"That's where I came from," he told himself. "I sure done a regular Santa Claus down that —— chimney. I hope to gosh I ain't broke nothin'."

He flexed his legs and arms, which pained him considerably, but he was soon assured that no bones were broken. Moving in directly under the opening he found a ladder, which extended upward. He laughed painfully and rubbed his nose. From somewhere he could hear the soft drone of voices.

He listened closely. They did not seem to come from above. He was unable to distinguish what was being said, but was very sure that it was a number of people talking.

Cautiously he moved along away from the ladder. It seemed to be a sort of a cave, rather than a prospect hole. He bumped into a projection and almost fell. Around this projection and about thirty feet away he could see the faint glow of a light. It was from the room above the trap door, but Sleepy had no way of knowing this.

He moved slowly toward this faint illumination and tripped over some object, sprawling on his hands and knees. He swore softly, as his sore hands and knees came in contact with the ground.

"Sleepy!" a voice whispered.

Sleepy sat up, rubbing his knees.

"Is that you, Hashknife?" he asked softly.

He did not seem to be surprized.

"Yeah, it's me. Got a knife?"

"I s'pose so. Got yuh tied up, pardner?"

Sleepy took out his pocket knife and in a few moments Hashknife was free. His hands were swollen from the tight ropes, and his arms seemed little better than clubs, but he knew they would soon be all right again.

"What's that ahead of us?" whispered Sleepy.

"Trap door into the ranch house," replied Hashknife painfully rubbing his wrists. "How in —— did you get in here?"

"Fell in," chuckled Sleepy. "Can yuh walk?"

"I reckon so."

Sleepy led the way back to the ladder and showed Hashknife where he had fallen in.

"And I never touched the sides," laughed Sleepy. "I'm the champion diver of the world."

"Kinda looks like yuh was," said Hashknife. "Let's get out of here before they come lookin' for me. Got a gun?"

"Yeah, I've got mine."

"We've got to get more."

Sleepy went up the ladder first. It was no difficult climb, and he sprawled in the brush, while Hashknife came slowly up, holding with his elbows to the narrow rungs. It was a painful proceeding for him, but he managed to get over the top.

For a while they sat together in the brush, gathering their strength.

"I've got one pretty black eye," decided Sleepy, "and my scalp kinda goes flip-flap in one place, but I'll live, I reckon. I wish I knowed where Big Medicine and the boys are. I left 'em on a pinnacle, while I investigated."

"How long ago was that?"

"Just before dark. I don't know how long I slept. Mebbe my clothes are out of style by this time."

He took out his gun and worked the action.

"It's all right," he decided. "Now what'll we do?"

He did not ask Hashknife for the details of what happened since he had been knocked down in the K-10 ranch house. The past could wait to be talked about.

"I didn't get a look at the outside of the place," said Hashknife. "They kept me blindfolded. But they're scared, cowboy. Don't never let anybody tell yuh that Baldy Kern and his crew ain't plumb scared. Torres is there, too, and he's scared. They know —— well that they're up against a hard deal.

"When you got away at the K-10, that ruined it for them. I'll bet yore ears burned a lot of times, over what they said. Baldy thought he had killed yuh. Lee Yung, the Chinaman, is one of their outfit. Faro Lannin' is down there, too. I dunno where he fits in, but he's not one of Baldy's outfit. There's another big Mexican called Gonzales. I owe him somethin' for givin' me a drink of hooch. Boy, I shore needed it just then. Well, let's go."

"Is Jack Hill down there?" asked Sleepy.

"Yeah, only his name ain't Hill; it's Meline. His dad is one of the big guns of this smugglin' layout."

Sleepy laughed softly, as they started down through the brush.

"It kinda looked like we had some job ahead of us," he whispered. "But it's a job that has to be done, I reckon."

The trip down the side of that bluff was no easy task, but they finally struck the flat ground at the corner of the shed, and crawled through the corral fence. It was light enough to distinguish the colors of the horses, and Hashknife chuckled at sight of his tall gray.

"I heard 'em talkin' about that gray, Sleepy," he said. "It seems that Baldy tried to ride it and got ditched good and proper."

"I seen him rise and glide," laughed Sleepy. "I was lookin' back at the time. One of 'em was throwin' lead at me, but never came within six feet of hittin' me or the horse."

CAUTIOUSLY they circled the corner and surveyed the triangular yard. From within came the dull rumble of voices. Hashknife pointed at the opposite end of the L.

"That's the kitchen end down there," he whispered. "Might be a good idea to take a look in there, eh?"

They crossed the yard and drew up close to the end window. The light from the open fireplace illuminated the room fairly well, and a glow of light showed through the doorway which led into the other room.

"Look at that table," whispered Hashknife. "There's a whole raft of guns on it. C'mon."

As they drew back from the window, Lopez came in from the other room and started toward the kitchen door. Hashknife and Sleepy ducked low, darted around the corner and ran to the door, where they flattened against the wall.

Lopez swung the door open, stepped out and reached for the jug, which he had placed just outside, and went sprawling without a sound, when Sleepy's six-shooter barrel swished down across the top of his head.

"One gone to seed," whispered Hashknife, as they crossed the threshold and over to the table, where they helped themselves to the guns which had been taken away from Big Medicine's outfit.

Hashknife shoved one inside the waistband of his overalls and took one in each hand, while Sleepy put one in his holster and one in each hand.

"Dressed to kill," breathed Hashknife. "And we wish them all a happy evenin'."

BIG MEDICINE sprang to his feet as Guadalupe herded Lucy and Wanna into the room, but Kohler drove him back with a rifle barrel.

"——, yuh, set down!" growled Baldy. "We gave yuh a front seat, and what more do yuh want? Set down and take yore medicine, you big fool! This ain't United States."

"You'll pay for this, Kern," said Big Medicine.

"Oh, all right," laughed Baldy. "Anyway, you won't be here to see it, so don'tcha worry about me. Get up here, Gonzales, and let's get this thing over."

Gonzales slouched to the front and tried to take Wanna by the arm, but she avoided him.

"Stand still!" snapped Baldy. "Yuh don't want to be tied, do yuh? C'mere, priest."

Father Francisco came forward slowly. He seemed very pale in the yellow lamp light, and his lips were set in a determined line.

"I refuse to perform this ceremony," he said slowly. "It is against the laws of God and man to do this thing."

"Oh, the —— it is!"

Baldy gritted his teeth and grasped the priest by the arm, causing him to wince with pain.

"You go right ahead and perform this marriage ceremony, or there'll be one priest runnin' loose in Mexico without ears."

"You would not dare!"

"Wouldn't I?" Baldy laughed sneeringly. "Why wouldn't I? I'm neither sniveling Catholic nor bawlin' Protestant. You don't mean anythin' to me, pardner. You do as I say, or suffer the consequences."

Baldy drew out a huge pocket knife, opened a blade and tested it on his thumb. Father Francisco knew that this man was just drunk enough, heartless, unprincipled enough to follow out his threat.

"I will do it under protest," said the priest slowly. "It will be no marriage to be sanctioned by God nor by man; words which may as well be spoken by any of you for all they may mean."

"Thassall right," grinned Baldy. "I reckon we'll have plenty of witnesses to prove that a priest done the job all proper."

Gonzales grasped Wanna by the arm and whirled her around, a laugh on his thick lips, when the lamp light flickered on a twisting blade, and Gonzales staggered back, clawing at his thick neck.

Torres had missed again. The guard on the knife had struck Gonzales in the neck, but the point had missed by an inch.

With a roar of rage Gonzales whipped out a revolver. Torres had darted toward the door, but Gonzales' bullet struck him and he went sidewise, slithering along the adobe wall and fell on his face.

"——, that was close!" whispered Gonzales hoarsely, feeling of his throat.

The crowd was shocked for a moment. Baldy went to Torres and turned him over, but came back quickly.

"Good shootin'," he said coldly. "That settles the argument, Gonzales, so we'll go ahead."

The priest was so badly shaken that he stared dumbly at the outstretched body of Torres, and his lips moved in prayer. Baldy touched him on the arm and motioned for him to proceed. Gonzales had released Wanna when the knife guard had struck him, but now he grasped her again.

But before the priest could begin the ceremony, Jack Meline stepped out from the wall, his bloody lips twisted strangely, and sent a bullet from a heavy revolver into the body of the big Gonzales.

It was so unlooked for that no one moved. Gonzales turned on his heel, a look of wonder on his cruel face. He did not seem to know what had happened. It seemed as if he was waiting for some one to explain. Then he went to his knees and sprawled sidewise, his huge hands gripping at the dirt floor.

Jack had not moved after the shot. The gun was still tensed at his side, a trickle of smoke coming from the muzzle.

"My ——, what did yuh do that for?"

Baldy's voice seemed high-pitched, querulous. Doctor Meline moved ponderously toward Jack, peering at him.

"You fool, have you gone mad?" he demanded. "Do you realize what you have done?"

Jack stepped against the wall, covering the doctor with the gun.

"I know what I've done," he said

hoarsely. "Don't make me do it again."

"By ——, he's gone loco!" exclaimed Baldy.

"I'm not crazy."

Jack shook his head.

"Go back," he warned his father. "Go back before I shoot."

Lucy and Wanna drew away, but no one tried to stop them.

"Somebody shoot the —— fool," ordered Baldy. "He's crazy, I tell yuh."

"What's the matter, Jack?" asked his father. "Put down that gun. Why are you acting like this?"

"Go ahead and shoot me, if you want to," said Jack, ignoring the doctor's questions.

"Stuck on the girl yourself, eh?" sneered Horan.

But Jack refused to debate the question. No one made a move to draw a gun. Kohler and Horan both held rifles in their hands, but something told them that this white-faced kid might shoot straight.

"It was a dirty deal," said Jack evenly. "I've been raised to admire dirty deals, but this one was more than I could stand. I never had a chance to live honest. Until lately I've never had any ambition to be anything but a crook.

"I don't know why I've changed. —— knows, I've no reason to help Big Medicine, except that he was right and I was wrong. They were good to me as long as I was good. I went away hating all of them. I hated them until I seen you trying to marry that girl off to a dirty Mexican crook, and then something made me hate all of you. I'm no better than you are. I know that. But even if I am, I hate you, and I'll block your dirty game as long as I can stand up."

"Jack, you're crazy!" Meline's voice broke. "Crazy, I tell you."

"I'm not crazy."

"You're full of dope!" declared Baldy.

Jack laughed softly, but shook his head.

"No, I'm not, Kern. I was one of my father's free customers before I got shot. I've had one dose since—no more. —— knows why he taught me to use it, but he did."

Doctor Meline shook his head, as if to deny it all, turned away, but whirled suddenly and flung himself at Jack. It was almost a surprize assault, but not quite. Jack pulled the trigger, as they clinched, and the big man staggered back, gripping his right forearm, where the heavy bullet had smashed its way through.

Big Medicine sprang to his feet, but Kohler was into him, rifle upraised, just as Baldy drew and fired at Jack. He was too close to miss. Jack sagged back, throwing a hand up to his face, and the next instant Baldy Kern whirled drunkenly, grasping at the table, while from the connecting doors came the heavy report of a six-shooter.

It was Hashknife and Sleepy, coming toward the crowd, shooting through their own smoke, taking the K-10 outfit so by surprize that they were stunned into inaction for a moment.

Kohler went down, almost falling into Big Medicine, who caught Kohler's rifle, and leaned against the wall, shooting from his hip. Ike yelped joyfully and flung himself headlong across the floor to get possession of Baldy's six-shooter, while Musical and Cleve almost fought each other to see which might get a chance to use the gun, which was still in Kohler's holster.

THE room was choked with smoke, through which darted flicks of flame, and the old adobe walls fairly shook from the concussion of the guns.

Then the reports ceased. It was like the touching off of a pack of firecrackers, a blending of many explosions for several seconds, which dies away to individual reports, unevenly spaced—then silence.

Smoke clouds drifted past the oil lamp. A man coughed rackingly; some one breathed heavily, like a runner after a long race. Hashknife and Sleepy came into the yellow fog around the table, peering through the haze.

"I think," said Musical hoarsely, breaking the silence. "I think I got the son of a gun that busted my 'Holy City.' "

He was on the floor beside the table, but now he got to his feet, peering at Hashknife and Sleepy. Big Medicine joined them. He had a bullet scrape across his cheek and there was blood on his right arm, where the sleeve had been torn away.

"Is everybody through?" queried Ike.

He and Cleve came into the lamplight.

"All through, I reckon," said Hashknife wearily. "I wish this smoke would clear."

Ike stumbled over and opened the door, and the air cleared rapidly. The priest had fallen back against the wall, but now he came to them, his face ashen.

"It has been a big night, *padre*," said Musical.

"A night of terror," mumbled the priest. "A terrible thing."

"Could 'a' been worse," smiled Sleepy. "We might 'a' been down there on the floor—with them."

The priest shuddered as Hashknife took the lamp and looked over the finish of the fight. There was little doubt of the outcome. Faro Lanning was still alive, as was Torres. The Pinnacle gambler squinted up at them, a painful grin on his thin lips.

"The hand is played out," he said wearily. "You win. I've always stayed until the last pot was played."

"I'm sorry, Faro," said Big Medicine. "I didn't know you was in on the deal until tonight."

"Not their deal," said Faro. "Torres, Reed, Garcia and myself were together. Blair was with us, too. He was the one who stole Meline's letter to Baldy Kern, tellin' Baldy about sendin' you a package. It was a fake package. We found it out. It said that Meline's son was comin' along, and Baldy was to send the package back by him. It would save any chance of a slip.

"Reed shot young Meline. It was a cold-blooded thing to do, but Reed hated Meline. The holdup netted us nothing. It was the four of us that took the cargo away from Baldy's outfit, and we almost got caught by the revenue officers.

"It was the four of us that planned to send you out after rustlers, while we tried to find the cargo. Olsen is a crook, but he didn't belong to either side. For five dollars he would do almost anything, and keep still. He knew we were goin' to hold up the stage that night. Torres wanted the girl, so we helped him take them away."

Torres had nothing to say. He knew that he was going fast, so they left him to the priest and went to the women. Wanna was crying, but Lucy, still stoical, held out her hand to Big Medicine, and they looked at each other. She did not show the least emotion, except that a faint smile passed her lips.

"Lucy," said Big Medicine slowly, "there are times when I thoroughly appreciate you."

She looked at him and turned her head away slightly.

"Sometimes," she said slowly.

Ike had been doing a little investigating on his own hook, and now he came back.

"That —— Guadalupe got away, I reckon," he said. "He ain't among the pile nowhere."

"Let him go," said Hashknife. "Mebbe it's a good thing. He can come back and take care of his friends."

Big Medicine held out his hand to Hashknife.

"I haven't thanked you, Hartley," he said. "You and Stevens showed up at the right moment, and it was your work that made it possible for us to get started."

"Don't thank me," said Hashknife. "Thank Sleepy. He fell into the cave and found me. And yuh might give a little thanks to the feller we called Jack Hill."

"Yes," Big Medicine spoke softly. "He deserves our thanks."

"I'd vote that we go home," said Musical. "There's nothin' we can do here. Faro and Torres cashed in their last white chip."

"Yes, we'll go home," said Big Medicine wearily. "Home will seem good after all this. Come, Lucy, Wanna. We're going home again, but we are not going to stay home all the time. We are going to travel more. Wanna, you'll see the cities, wear pretty clothes. I'll have the old ranch house torn down and a new one built. We'll begin to live now!

"I've got plenty of cattle left. We'll trail a bunch down to Caliente and sell them off. We'll sell some horses, too. As soon as we're able we'll improve the hot springs, and make folks want to come to Hawk Hole. We've been buried for years, but now we're going to dig our way out into the sunshine."

He seemed almost incoherent in his promises. Wanna looked at him, her eyes wide with surprize, as he put his arms around her and kissed her on the cheek. It was not at all like him. Lucy grinned and held out her hand to Hashknife.

"*Mahsie*," she said, half whispering her thanks.

"Yo're sure awful welcome," he said gravely.

"Let's go out the kitchen door," suggested Sleepy, and they filed out into the night.

The stars seemed very close out there in the hills. Somewhere a mocking bird was calling, "*Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter.*"

"Lopez got away, too," said Sleepy.

"That's good," sighed Hashknife. "He was only the cook."

They left Big Medicine with the women and went after the horses. The shed was filled with saddles, and they had no trouble in selecting their horses. The K-10 horses were farther down the trail, so they only saddled for Hashknife, and the two women.

Hashknife led his tall gray out of the corral and around to the yard, where he found Lucy and Wanna together.

"Where's Big Medicine?" he asked.

"He gone back," said Lucy, pointing toward the door.

Hashknife dropped his reins and walked to the doorway. There was only an odor of the powder smoke left. Big Medicine was standing near the opposite wall, looking down at the body of Jack Meline. He did not see Hashknife, so intent was he. Suddenly he reached down, grasped one of the hands and held it for several moments.

Then he got slowly erect, sighed deeply and turned to see Hashknife. For several moments they looked at each other. Big Medicine came slowly across the room, stopped beside Hashknife and looked back.

"What was it, Hawkworth?"

Hashknife spoke in a whisper, realizing that it was something that only concerned Big Medicine.

"The philosophy of ignorance," said Big Medicine slowly.

Hashknife's memory flashed back to the time he had said those same words to Big Medicine.

"You don't mean——"

Hashknife hesitated, looking closely at Big Medicine.

"It was twenty years ago," said the big man hoarsely. "Jim Meline was my best friend. I wanted to give the little kid a chance, Hartley. He was too small to remember. I didn't want him to be a half-breed, don't you see?

"I've saved for him all these years. Meline was investing my money for the boy—I thought. It hurt Lucy."

Big Medicine drew his hand across his forehead, as he turned and looked back at the body, lying in the shadows.

"But she doesn't know, Hartley. She must never know."

Big Medicine choked, as he gripped Hashknife's arm.

"I've got to leave him here, Hartley. Maybe I'll come back some day and find where they put him. But don't you see, I wanted to give him his chance?"

"You did, pardner," said Hashknife softly. "He took his chance when it came along. My ——, he went out like a man! What more could you want?"

"Like a man," mumbled Big Medicine. "Like a white man, Hartley."

Big Medicine lifted his head. The boys were coming with the horses, and some one asked for Big Medicine and Hashknife.

"All right, boys," called Big Medicine, "we're coming."

His big hand gripped the sore knuckles of Hashknife, and they went hand in hand back to the horses, which would soon take them out of the land of *mañana* and into a better tomorrow for Hawk Hole.

BEHIND them a mocking bird still called "*Peter*." Out at the corral a white-faced priest mumbled a prayer, as he saddled a sway-backed horse, while within the house the wrinkled face of Guadalupe peered over the edge of the trap door. He looked like a very old monkey, except that few have seen a monkey cry tears. Perhaps they were tears of remorse, but it must be remembered that Torres had promised him one hundred dollars in American gold. *Quien sabe?*

THE SLEEPING PARTNER

Author of "The Cask," "The Barrier," etc.

JIM HOYLE paused irresolutely and looked from the sea to a small hillock just above high-water mark—or rather, to the dead man who lay upon it—and back to the sea again.

Should he drag the body down to the water's edge and heave it into the sea where the sharks would dispose of it in a few moments, or should he let it remain where it was? It did not really matter very much one way or the other, for the ants would dispose of it, all but the bones, very nearly as quickly as the sharks. He eventually decided to leave it to the ants to feast upon and thus save himself the troublesome and unpleasant task of dragging his late partner the twenty yards or so across the beach.

Having satisfactorily settled this matter, Jim Hoyle walked along the shore for about a quarter of a mile till he reached a small lagoon where lay a half-decked boat moored to some palms growing on the brink. He unfastened the mooring rope, climbed into the boat and pushed off, using an oar as a pole till he was out of the shallows. Then he hoisted the fore and mainsails, and the boat passed slowly out of the lagoon into the sun-washed sea beyond.

As he looked back over his shoulder at the island he had left, Jim Hoyle saw the little hillock and that which lay upon it—a small, dark object which might have been anything, but which he knew to be the corpse of his one-time friend and partner. And an evil grin came into Hoyle's face as he reflected that the pearls—the pearls for which they had worked and sweated and daily risked their lives—were now his; all of them. He had always hated the idea of sharing them, of relinquishing half, and now he would be spared that painful necessity. Corby was dead. Good luck to him!

The breeze was freshening and the island was fast slipping away astern as the sails bellied and the boat gathered speed. Hoyle took a reef in the mainsail, then lashed the tiller so that he might leave it and crawl into the little forecastle, light his pipe and take a look at the chart. In a couple of days—or less if the wind held—he ought to make Nukahiva in the Marquesas, where he could get a passage on some copra boat or trading schooner for Tahiti.

His reflections were interrupted by a sudden lurch and the sound of water splashing into the cockpit. Hastily crawling out, he found that the wind had freshened still more and that the sea was getting up. He took another reef in the mainsail, baled out most of the water from the cockpit and then, straightening his weary back, glanced uneasily at the lowering sky. He wondered incidentally what time it was, and cursed himself for not having taken Corby's wrist watch. A showy woman's trinket, he had often chaffed Corby for wearing it. But the thing had kept good time and would have been useful. Yes, he was a fool not to have taken the trinket, much as he despised it.

The day waned into a brief twilight, and the sea had become an ugly bluish-gray

"The Sleeping Partner," copyright, 1925, by Rolf Bennett.

with short, choppy waves whose crests foamed as they raced by. Hoyle, though not an experienced sailor, knew this for a sign of bad weather, and cursed. Why, after weeks of unbroken calm and broiling sunshine, should the weather break now, just when he wanted it to remain fine? He swore again and sought comfort by feeling in his pocket where the little canvas bag with the pearls lay.

Night, with masses of ragged black cloud scurrying across the sky as if hastening breathlessly toward some somber destination. Hoyle, huddled up in the cockpit, watched them uneasily and tried to keep awake. But despite the violent pitching of the boat and the shriek of the wind through the rigging, he dropped into fitful dozes.

In his broken dreams he again enacted the events of that morning. His skilfully provoked quarrel, with Corby leading, as he had intended it should, to Corby striking him. They had fought; Corby excitedly, and even then puzzled as to the cause of it all; Hoyle coolly, deliberately following a definite, prearranged plan. At last, goaded to fury, Corby had reached for the knife in his belt; but Hoyle, who had foreseen and planned everything, had his knife handier still. And that was how he came to leave Corby, his ex-comrade, crumpled up on the little hillock facing the sea.

AWAKENED by a more violent lurch than usual, Hoyle looked out and saw that the mainsail boom was swinging wildly back and forth, while the foresail flapped and cracked as the wind caught it first on one side, then on the other. It dawned upon him then that the wind had veered round while he slept and that the boat was in danger of being swamped.

He hastily unlashed the helm, swung the boom over and maneuvered till the sails caught the wind again. After a little while his eyes closed once more, and he dreamed fretfully. In one of those dreams he fancied himself kneeling by the side of his dead partner, and while so doing he saw the corpse reach out a hand—the hand with the wrist watch—and dive into his pocket for the bag of pearls.

A sudden jolt which nearly flung him off the seat awakened Hoyle, and for a moment he gazed about him uncomprehendingly, his face bedewed with the cold sweat of terror. Then he realized that dawn was breaking and that the boat had run aground on some sandy beach. He hastily scrambled ashore and stood peering through the dawn twilight. Evidently he was on an island, for beyond the shore he could see a fringe of ghostly palms swaying in the wind.

As it grew lighter he set off to explore his surroundings. Skirting the beach, he pushed through a belt of palms and creepers and, reaching the other side, stopped abruptly. For, on a little hillock in front of him, lay a man's body, Corby's body, just as he had left it.

There was no question now as to what had happened. The change of wind had brought him back to the island.

He found himself moving slowly, reluctantly, toward the body. He had no desire to do so, but something stronger than himself, some imperative and irresistible urge, forced him on. Within a yard or so of it, he halted. The spectacle was not a pleasant one, for the ants had been at work and so, too, had the birds. The morning sunlight sparkled on the gold wrist watch above the claw-like and nearly fleshless hand. Jim Hoyle shuddered. He lacked the nerve now to bend over that ghastly object and detach the watch.

With an effort he turned away and hurried back to the opposite beach. In spite of the heavy sea he succeeded in pushing the boat off and beating out into the wind. Not until the island had become a mere cloud-like smudge in the distance did he lash the tiller and prepare himself some food. He did it more or less mechanically, for his thoughts were still with the dead man on the little hillock.

It wasn't murder, he told himself; he had given the other man a chance, and if he hadn't knifed Corby, Corby would have knifed him. In fact it was almost a fair fight, as fair as most fights anyway. No, it certainly was not murder, not real murder.

When he had eaten he looked at the chart, but was unable to ascertain his position. No matter; if he kept on he would get somewhere, if not to Nukahiva then to some other place. Almost anywhere would do so long as it was not that accursed island he had left.

The sound of water surging into the cockpit brought him out of the forecastle just in time to see a mountain of green water descending upon the boat. It swept down,

broke on the port quarter and thundered into the cockpit. He seized the tiller and succeeded in bringing the boat round before she broached to. It had been an unpleasantly close shave and warned him that he must not trust to a lashed tiller when sailing close into the wind. Drenched to the skin and up to his knees in water, Hoyle started to bale with one hand and steer with the other. It was difficult to do both at once, and when he had reduced the water a little, he let the rest remain.

He was beginning to feel drowsy, and at intervals his eyes closed. Then he would pull himself together with a jerk just in time very often to prevent the boat from falling off into the wind. At last, realizing that he must have sleep, he decided to lash the tiller and run before the wind, leaving the steering to chance. He did this, crawled into the forecastle and fell asleep immediately.

Again he was haunted by that terrible dream in which he found himself bending over the dead man. And again, to his horror, the skeleton hand with the wrist watch round its bare bones reached out to grasp the bag of pearls.

He woke up shivering, bathed in a cold sweat. Outside he found the wind had dropped to a faint breeze which, a little later, gave place to a perfect calm so that there was nothing for it but to let the boat drift. He might slumber in comparative ease and safety now, but he had come to dread sleep with its terrible dreams. So the hours passed, and toward evening his eyes closed in spite of all his efforts—and he dreamed.

IT WAS dark when he woke up, shivering and sweating as usual. The sails were still flapping idly in the breathless night, but the boat was moving slowly, evidently caught in some current.

Hoyle settled down in the cockpit to meditate on all the things he would do when he sold the pearls—for they must be worth a thousand pounds if not more. A man could enjoy himself for a time on a thousand pounds. And he had got them, his share and the other man's. What if he had been better prepared than Corby; had pulled his knife quicker than Corby? That was all to his credit, surely. And if Corby had not taken offence at his chaff—for Hoyle was beginning to convince himself that his provocation had been merely chaff—why, that was Corby's fault. A man who couldn't take a joke deserved all he got.

Dawn. An island in the distance, an island fringed with palms. Nothing in that; there were hundreds of islands in these parts, and they were nearly all fringed with palms. And yet there seemed something familiar——

Jim Hoyle pushed out the mainsail boom in the hope of catching a little breeze, a puff of wind even. But there was no breeze, no puff of wind, and the boat, carried shoreward by the current, grounded gently on a long stretch of glistening sand.

Hoyle scrambled ashore and looked about him suspiciously. Was it *the* island which he had approached from another side, or one something like it? So many of these cursed little islands were alike that, unless you were a navigator and could work out a reckoning, you never knew where you were.

He walked up the beach, still uncertain in his mind. Sometimes he thought he recognized a familiar spot, but could not be sure. If it was the island, he had landed on a different part of it, not on the side where he and Corby had lived and toiled.

He strode on, forced a passage through the surrounding creepers and undergrowth and at last found himself looking down upon the only too familiar lagoon. There was no mistaking it. There were the heaps of rotting oyster shells, the rough shack of branches and the rude bench. And Hoyle swore aloud; swore in an attempt to reassure himself, to try to drive away the cold horror that was gradually taking possession of him.

He turned away with the intention of retracing his steps to the boat, but paused ere he had gone a dozen yards. Over there to the right and screened from view by the palms, lay—it. He wondered if it were still there. But why shouldn't it be, who or what would have shifted it? It was downright foolishness but—impelled once more by that irresistible urge, he passed through the fringe of palms and presently stood over the dead body of Corby.

Little remained now but the gaunt skeleton and—the gold wrist watch. But not for twice the value of the pearls he had stolen would Hoyle have laid a hand on the fleshless wrist.

At last he threw off the evil fascination which had drawn him hither and, cursing himself for every known brand of fool, hastened, blindly stumbling in his eagerness, back to the spot where he had left the boat. At first, when he caught sight of the beach, he thought he must have missed his way and arrived at a different part of the island because, when he looked, there was no sign of the boat. Then, as his eyes roamed the deserted shore, he chanced to glance far out to sea where a small black object was floating away on the current.

It was some moments before Jim Hoyle could bring himself to realize the extent of the calamity which had befallen him. Then it came to him, and, standing there upon the white and sun-washed beach, he raised both hands to heaven and cursed with the fierce and awful impotency of blind despair. He was alone, a prisoner on this accursed island; alone with the man he had killed; with that whitening skeleton. Alone with that and—what else?

The faint stirring of a breeze caused the leaves to rustle and sent a low, whimpering sound through the tall palm stems so that Hoyle, his nerves on edge, swung round with a hoarse cry, one arm lifted as if to ward off a blow from an unseen hand. But there was nothing, nothing save himself and the palms and the wind and—it.

He became conscious of a burning thirst and set off to where he knew there was a stream of fresh water. He reached it and saw, lying close by, a rusty tin pannikin, a pannikin which Corby had left there. He dipped it in the water and drank greedily, then flung himself down in the shade and tried not to go to sleep. But he was bone-weary, the sun was sorching hot, and presently his eyes closed.

Once more he was visited by that terrifying dream, and this time it was so real that he was awakened by his own cry of terror and felt in his pocket to make sure that it was no more than a dream, and that the pearls were still there. Reassured, he laughed at his fear, then shuddered and looked behind him. Nothing but the palms and the undergrowth was there—and that which he knew lay behind them.

He rose and went to look at the shack which he and Corby had built for themselves. In the event of a storm or one of those sudden tropical downpours it would be useful as a shelter. He decided to mend it and replace with new branches the old ones which had shrunk or withered away.

In his search for material he reached the head of the stream and found, lying in the water, the bloated bodies of two dead birds. He fished them out and flung the poisonous carcasses as far away as he could.

Later on, in the cache which he and Corby had made, he found some bully beef and biscuits. He made a supper of these and then lay down in the shack. He must get away from this infernal island somehow, he told himself, even if he had to trust to a rudely constructed raft.

NIGHT fell with its usual swiftness. The stars came out, and the blue dome above became a scintillating mass of jewel lights. The moon rose, cold and white, and shadows moved upon the sand. The night wind whispered through the trees, the leaves rustled, twigs cracked and snapped, creatures of the night came out and the air was filled with strange noises.

Hoyle lay in the shack listening. He knew that the shadows were no more than shadows; that the noises were the natural noises of the place and time. Yet he waited for a sound that was none of these; a sound he had never heard as yet, save in his dreams—the creaking of dry bones, the stiff and clumsy tread of that which has lost the living elasticity of its walk.

He dozed and dreamed and toward morning felt as if a fire had been kindled in his throat. He staggered to the pool, but the water seemed not to quench the fires within him, though outwardly he was shivering as with ague.

So he lay there while the sun rose and beat down upon his unprotected head. Consumed by the inward fires, he no longer used the pannikin to scoop up the water but, prone upon his chest, drank direct from the stream. Yet neither the water which he drank nor that which he splashed about his burning head seemed to quench his thirst or cool him.

A mood of recklessness took possession of him, and he tried to sing the chorus of some half-forgotten music-hall ditty, only to stop abruptly as something pink, something that looked like a flayed rat, came running toward him. He screamed and covered his face with his hands, and when he looked again the thing had disappeared.

He and Corby were diving for pearls now in the lagoon, and while he looked Corby changed from a living man into a skeleton. He scrambled up and tried to fight the thing, then drew his knife—and the vision melted.

Followed a period of unconsciousness, and then once more those fearful things advanced upon him; weird and horrible creatures, things unnatural and obscene; they sprang at him, crawled up his clothing, leered at him from the branches of the trees, peered at him out of the water until, foaming at the mouth, his hands clawing at the empty air, he fell to the ground, his limbs and the muscles of his face working horribly.

Presently he was on his feet again. The sun was still blazing in the heavens, and he had no idea whether it was the same day or the next, whether an hour or a week had elapsed. He did not care; he feared nothing, not even the little devil faces and the things which looked at him out of the undergrowth.

He laughed aloud and staggered in the direction of the hillock. He was going to see Corby; he liked Corby, and they would have a song and a dance. Funny to see old Corby's skeleton dancing, the funniest thing imaginable for a skeleton. What the deuce was he thinking about? Corby wasn't a skeleton; Corby was alive. Why on earth did he keep thinking of skeletons?

Sure, there was Corby on the hillock, thinking no doubt of what he was going to do when they realized on the pearls. Ah, yes; but he must get those pearls for himself, he wasn't going to let Corby have them. He would provoke a quarrel and knife Corby. That would not be murder; it would be just a fight. Yes, that was the idea.

He reached the hillock, then started back with a shriek. A skeleton lay there, the skeleton of a man, of Corby. It must be Corby because of the gold wrist watch. No man he had ever met before had worn such a thing. Then Corby *was* dead, and these were his bones. And the thing was grinning at him; it was moving—God in heaven, the thing was getting on its feet, approaching him!

He put out a hand to ward it off, stumbled and fell forward on to the pitiful and motionless remains of the dead man.

SOME few weeks later a copra schooner dropped anchor off the island and a boat put off in charge of the mate for the purpose of finding fresh water. They discovered the stream, and while the men were filling a couple of kegs the mate took a stroll round. Presently the men at the pool heard a shout and, running in the direction of the sound, came upon the mate gazing down at two skeletons which lay together on a little hillock.

"Looks like as if they'd been and killed each other," commented one of the men.

The mate nodded and kicked aside a rusty sheath knife which lay near.

"Finished filling them kegs?" he inquired.

They were turning away when another man, looking closer, uttered an exclamation.

"Say, what's the little bag that cap's got in his hand?" he demanded. "Him with the wrist watch, I mean."

by F. St. Mars

PLUCK'S BROKEN PAROLE

Author of "Wild Gas," "Warden of the Herds," etc.

IT IS a terrible thing to break your parole. More especially is it terrible if you belong to a great and proud regiment, are the idol of that regiment—as well as the mascot—and know more about its internal and external affairs than all the sergeants put together; and they, it is said, know more than the officers.

Pluck had been on parole ever since that day a year before in India, when the "bearer" caught him hunting snakes in the major's tent, and held him up ignominiously chattering with impotent rage. Nine out of ten men would have called him a stoat and ordered his immediate decease, but the major was the tenth, and took him on his knee, and fed him with raisins, and said:

"By Jove! A young mongoos, eh what?"

And, as the major said, so it was.

Thereafter Pluck divided his waking hours between ridding camps of rats, saving people's lives from snakes—he killed a six-foot cobra under the major's bed—and brewing unholy blood-feuds with the youngest subaltern's fox-terrier, the colonel's lady's Persian cat, and sundry low-caste pariah dogs. His sleeping hours he spent promiscuously between the major's pillow and lap when in camp, and the said gentleman's pockets and saddle-holster when on the march.

For these reasons, and a few hundred others, mostly disreputable, he was admittedly quite one of the regiment. So much so in fact that when the regiment went home to stay in barracks and recruit, Pluck must needs go with it, for the pet of a regiment is a holy thing, not to be abandoned though empires fall.

Pluck was somewhat of a contradiction. For instance, it was obviously unique for a beast whose body covered seventeen inches and whose tail occupied another fourteen and a quarter to go about on legs so short that he scarcely cleared the ground. This gave him a snaky appearance, which his doings belied. Then, too, he ought, judging by character and appearance, to have belonged to the weasel tribe but instead, he occupied a place among a family whose official title is *Viverridae*, midway between the cats and the dogs, neither of which he resembled in the least.

Then again, Nature had eliminated fear from his composition, and it must be conceded that a beast, even though it be but small, who is without fear and possessed of a quickness of movement exceeding even that of a snake, is not usual.

And Pluck, after all those months, broke his parole. The major was asleep on the veranda of the officers' quarters, which lay, with the barracks, far on the outskirts of a small town, which in its turn lay in a very wild part of England. Moreover, it was a very hot day.

It was the mixed wood opposite that did it.

The climbing tiers of ash and beech and oak, dotted here and there with the grace of an elm trunk or a single sycamore, patched into a dream of beauty where the wild crab trees and the cherry broke in

waves of pale foam. All of which perfection pulsated with life—one great, soft voice, whose component parts were the fairy cadence of willow wrens, the fluting of lazy blackbirds, the smashing delivery of a singing chaffinch, the drowsy, sensuous cooing of wood pigeons, and over, through and under all, the rhythmic, heat-sodden hum of the insect world.

It was the voice of the wild, and it was calling him, as it must call to every wild captive sooner or later; as it calls to every man even, at least once in his lifetime.

In a flash he was across the velvet lawn, where the spotted flycatchers hawked restlessly from the tennis net, and the banked laurels, receiving him, swallowed him utterly.

He passed swiftly from the fettered laurels upward to the unfettered woods and all that the woods had to offer. He stopped for a moment to watch a wordy dispute between a jet blackbird with an orange bill and a red squirrel, both unconscious of the picture they had made against the many-shaded green; paused to admire the figure of a cock pheasant in an open glade, and wasted quite half a minute in scanning a clearing bejeweled with green and yellow green finches, pink and blue chaffinches, and salmon-red, gray and black bullfinches.

Decidedly this new, ordered, and peaceful, temperate wild—so different from the gorgeous, cruel splendor of his own Oriental wild—was good to soothe a homesick heart.

THEN, suddenly, there came a pattering upon the dead leaves. Instantly Pluck fell flat, hugged his mother earth—how good she smelt—and was not. This again was a sure proof of his near kin to the cat tribe; for none save a cat or a mongoos could have executed that lighting-like self-effacement.

The pattering increased to a swift drumming. A rabbit, eyes astare, burst from one of the still, gray-blue caverns among the massive trunks, almost fell over him, and passed on with the blind flight of one fleeing from death. And, close behind, death itself followed with swift, undulating, snake-like springs—a big, lean, cruel, insolent dog-stoat.

"Remember, Pluck, you little ruffian, wherever you go and whoever you see, you must always carry yourself as an officer and a gentleman," the major had said to him jokingly upon more than one occasion.

Small need however. Was not he a mongoos? That is enough—all mongooses are gentlemen, aristocratic from the tips of their short, sharp noses to their dainty, tiny, well-bred feet.

A meaner beast would have slain the rabbit on chance; it passed close enough. Pluck, however, rose up in the stoat's path, rose up and stared, as who should say—

"What the dickens do *you* want?"

And the stoat, to use a rude expression, being absolutely "flummuxed," dug his front paws into the leaves and stopped very dead indeed. His little, cruel, bloodshot eyes gazed into those of Pluck, and that which he saw there was not comforting. He had been used to deal out fear with a lavish, a too lavish, hand in those woods, and the one thing that he did not see in these eyes that squarely met his was fear.

The two small terrors measured one another carefully, as do old and cunning masters of fence when crossing swords for the first time.

Oddly alike, and yet unlike, in their oddity were they. The long, lithe bodies on short legs were similar and of the same plan. The courage above proof was identical in each. Yet there was a difference, a difference of perfection.

The mongoos represented the stoat carried a little farther, a little more perfect, more agile, more graceful, more clever, in the scale of life. His better breeding showed now by contrast as it had never shown elsewhere.

The stoat began the passage-at-arms by launching himself at the intruder almost as quickly as the eye could follow. Where swiftness of movement was concerned he knew of no beast, save the black rat, that could beat him. He met that beast now, however, for he landed upon a mongoos which had moved quicker than the eye could follow.

Pluck was standing a yard away, and the amazed stoat blinked his eyes stupidly. Pluck had grown bigger by half as much again, his longish fur stood out from the body at an angle of ninety degrees, his tail was like a lamp-grass brush, his eyes burning as if they must eat through his head.

Then he began his war dance, prancing on dainty feet that seemed hardly to touch

the ground, backward and forward, backward and forward in front of the foe, crooning to himself the while in a strange, absorbed way.

The stoat dealt in hypnotism himself—chaffinches and young rabbits were his best mediums—but this arched-back, pendulum-like prancing and diabolical, low, ceaseless hum of the mongoos held him rooted to the ground. And at each turn the mongoos drew nearer; that was the rub.

Suddenly, when he was only a foot away, the crooning increased, and the mongoos faced his foe, leaping up and down, quicker and quicker, to the accompaniment of his gradually rising, weird chant. He was working himself up into a very fine fury indeed.

The second leap of the stoat was just a tenth of a second more instantaneous than his first attempt, and his fangs slipped helplessly through long fur. Then something happened.

The mongoos was upon the stoat's back, his fangs buried in the back of his foe's flat cranium. Then he walked away, and what was left of that stoat was not much good for anything, except the burying beetles.

Pluck climbed steadily after that till he left behind him the soft beauty of the mixed wood.

Anon he struck a larch-wood, where he discovered a capercaillie's nest. It was at the feet of three trees; a clumsy affair, not well hidden. He reflected that in his country birds were wiser; but then he knew nothing of the word "preserved," and game laws were to him of no account.

Pluck stood for a while as if in thought, looking at the twelve big, reddish-yellow eggs lightly spotted with red. In reality he was wondering what manner of bird it might be that owned that nest, and where in the name of whiskers she was just then.

He did not know, though if he had spoken their lingo any of the beady-eyed, watching bank-voles could have told him that the booming, powerful cry, which can only be written "*Peller! peller!*" that seemed to live in the upper blue-blackness of a Scotch fir hard by, belonged to the landlord of that home.

"Where ignorance is bliss, the fearful do brave deeds."

Pluck was not by any means fearful, but he did a brave thing—he raided that nest.

Now, you would be hard put to it to discover a beast in those parts whose courage included capercaillie-nest raiding; they knew their host. And Pluck became aware of the fact that all was not well, thirty-five seconds later. There seemed, as it were, an avalanche descending upon him, with a proper accompaniment of flying twigs—and the "*Peller!*" cry had ceased.

Pluck had dropped his egg, or rather the capercaillie's egg, and shifted four feet. Then he looked round, and quizzically regarded twenty-seven inches of an enraged hen capercaillie landing heavily upon the spot where he wasn't. He ought to have precipitated himself into cover, but, instead, he sat up on his haunches the better to view the new phenomenon.

With a sweep like a sweep of a lady's dress, the capercaillie literally fell upon the mongoos. Again he shifted himself exactly four feet, and looked as before. Again she fell upon him, and this time, quick as an angry thought, he fell upon her. None saw it. None could see it. It was too quick for that. Nevertheless, the hen capercaillie, for all her flapping, lay quite dead, with her spinal column severed.

Therefore Pluck took up the business of egg-collecting where he had left off. He bit a little, neat, round hole in the end of one egg, and critically sucked the contents. He bit a little hole in a second egg and honored it with a similar fate. He bit a hole in the same manner in a third egg and——

At first he thought that a bough of the tree had fallen, then that an eagle had swooped upon his life, then that he had upset a whirlwind. Nevertheless, he cleared the thing, whatever it was, by an eighth of an inch. Even though he had to tumble backward to do it it was a marvel enough, seeing that he had not an inkling of warning.

Pluck took one spring, turned—and drew a long breath. He was beholding thirty-six inches of a greatly annoyed cock capercaillie for the first time, and it rather amazed him. Of course he ought to have been afraid; any ordinary beast would, but he was no ordinary beast. He was happy, immensely so. Here was going to be a fight—a grand fight.

The snap of a twig in a larch-wood makes a noise not very much less than a pistol shot. Pluck jumped for cover, and the

capercaillie for the upper air, departing as he had come, like a young whirlwind. The form of a passing man showed for a second not twenty yards away, vanishing again into the dim, blue-black caverns, like a figure in a dream, and Pluck beheld his first gamekeeper.

Luckily for him the intolerant spirit which led him to carry his Indian blood feuds into the enemies' country had taught him that all men, save those in the regiment, were to be avoided, on the grounds of health. Moreover, he had learned to distinguish the smell of a steel "gin," which is an accomplishment given only to otters, wolverines, a few old rats, and a very few foxes.

If you know the horrible smell of a steel knife, you will understand how such an apparent mystery may be worked by a keen-nosed beast providing he has been there before. Therefore Pluck let his first keeper go by without betraying himself.

Then he returned to his feast. Soon, however, he tired of it. The eggs were too big and too many to be consumed all at one time. He hid two against famine and departed. This strange, new wild greatly interested him; he had a longing to see more of it, for his family were always exploreres.

Still climbing upward, he set the larchwood behind him, and landed out on a hollow table land—the cap, as it were, of the great, blunt-headed hills.

Here dull silver palm-sallow and herb-willow drew a gentle haze over the wildness of the place. Startling patches of exotic green, incrusted with the wonderful grass of Parnassus, and flanked and scarred with the deep bronze of sweet gale, betrayed those evil, boggy places that dot the eternal moors and hills like cruel guardians of the solitude.

IT WAS beside one of these that Pluck, apparently careless and mindful of nothing, shot backward as if he had stepped upon a spring. He had not, but there was a speckled band, a straw-colored thing like a garter with a zig-zag pattern in chocolate embroidered throughout its length. Pluck had seen such garters before, not of the same pattern exactly, but similar, and he knew that he who wears such a one about his leg dies swiftly and not without pain. It was a snake.

Now, there is one tribe in all the wild whose heritage it is to spread greater fear and receive more hate than any other—that is the snake tribe. Therefore Pluck's utter lack of fear—this is a different thing from lack of caution—was sufficient to amaze even a snake. The reptile was an adder, and the same are not altogether an unarmed breed.

Almost at once Pluck began his war dance, bouncing from side to side and humming to himself in an odd, low chant. You know the attitude of an angry cat? That attitude Pluck now assumed, even to the arched back, and eyes that glowed like fuses alight in darkness.

Slowly the adder half reared and drew back that evil, flat head which all poison snakes have, as a catapult sling is drawn back. A cold, malignant hiss filled that quiet place, turning every beast and bird within hearing into a frozen image, and the steely glitter of the lidless, changeless eyes of the thing turned full upon the mongoos.

All it knew of fear, all it had practised of hypnotism, that snake brought into play in the next few minutes; but the crooning never ceased, and the war dance grew faster and yet more dizzily fast.

Never for a second did the mongoos remain in one spot, and never for the thousandth of a second did he take his eyes off those stony orbs of the enemy. If he read them correctly he knew what was coming about half a millionth of a second before it came.

It came at last, a lightning flash of a stroke, a lick out and back again of the cruel, flat head, and—nothing.

A watcher would have said that Pluck had been struck, and the watcher would have been wrong. The curved poison-fangs of the snake had no more than whipped through the bristling long fur of the mongoos. That snake had struck short—else, what use the puffed-out fur? That was its meaning, its idea; to induce snakes to strike short.

A beast who baited six-foot cobras for a pastime—for a pastime, be pleased to note—was not likely to be tripped up, as it were, by a mere common adder.

Six times that snake struck, and six times he met fur only, and again fur. Then the mongoos did something. I can not tell what. He moved from the ground to the snake. At least one presumes so.

He certainly was upon the snake, complacently chewing its head, and he must have leaped there, but the leap was so quick, so instantaneous, that man could not follow it.

We must leave Pluck to his feast. In the Orient where he came from, men turn their backs upon the world when they feed. It is perhaps as well. Nay, more, in the case of a snake-eater, it is best. Pluck forgot his manners when he dined off snake.

We find him next, this deserter of ours, on the following day, some miles downhill, wandering in a great sea of the beautiful purple-spotted orchids, on a low common tenanted by three geese, one gander, a goat, and eight wheatears—gray and black and buff little birds, who were the essence of life.

About sundown Pluck struck a lone hill road. He followed it to an even more lone hill farm. Here, in a setting of borage, he struck one of the finest elder trees you ever saw; also a flock of guinea-fowl.

The guinea-fowl came to that tree to roost; being guinea-fowl, they would, instead of sleeping in the official quarters man provided for them. By the light of the setting sun they showed as wonderful red images against a red-gnarled trunk, on an outlying root of which perched a redstart with a fiery tail, prospecting for caterpillars in the broken half of a red flowerpot.

A man, a laborer homeward-bound, passed within twenty yards. But it never entered his brain to inquire why the usually restless, noisy guinea-fowl seemed to be sitting for their portraits. If he had, however, he would have discovered the fact that they were seeing a mongoos, and seeing it for the first time, and although they can not have known from Adam what it was, some far-off memory of a long-dead African ancestor concerning mongoos must have awakened in their tame brains, and frozen them stiff with fear.

There were eleven guinea-fowl there before Pluck turned up—not after. The farmer's wife counted one short next day. And she never knew the truth about that vanishment.

Pluck departed from that place swiftly, and in the middle of a raw, red plowed field, cleaned himself from head to foot. Except a housefly and a cat, there is no creature living that attends to its toilet with more punctiliousness than a mongoos. When all was finished, he removed again to a wood.

Suddenly coming over the bosom of a fallow field that ran up to the wood he stopped; stopped so dead that he might almost have been turned to stone. Figures were crawling by the briers that flanked the wood, and rabbits were running hither and thither like things possessed. He knew nothing of poachers, or else—but never mind.

A swift drumming of clean, clawed feet came to him in the stillness that followed. He was aware of two great, lean dogs hurtling over the open upon him. The hare is swift, but these dogs were swifter than any hare. They were above him—in a flash.

Two sets of steely jaws clashed above the luckless mongoos simultaneously. He went from sight beneath them.

Then—and then—one dog swept on, and the other had stopped, had stopped and was twisting round and round in wild, blind circles, howling unutterably; and the lurcher is a silent dog, too.

Pluck was fixed, as a burr fixes, at the dog's throat.

It may have been the howl that drove five khaki clad figures out of a lane hard by, and brought those figures, led by a huge, six-foot corporal, stampeding across the solemn fields to the accompaniment of wild Irish yells. It may, or again it may not. Any way, they had been sent out by the major to look for Pluck, and apparently they knew where to find him, *i.e.*, in the middle of a row.

SAID the adjutant to the major:

"Th' boys are happy to-night. Wonder what new devilry they've been up to, sir? This is outrageous."

It was.

Through the solemn, peaceful, long, lingering twilight, arose the sounds as of a small riot.

"Listen!" said the major.

"Oh, bhoys, ye should 've seen the fun,
You should 've seen him when 'twas done,
His eye-balls one by one did disappear,
And a docthor from th' South
Took eight dhays to find his mouth,
Which had somehow got concealed behind his ear."

Sung by five lusty Irish throats in the peaceful summer twilight of a very ancient and proper English town, it certainly was, as the adjutant said, outrageous.

But that was nothing. On to the holy precincts of the tennis lawn broke five giants, led by a corporal holding aloft a seventeen-inch little beast, a spitting, swearing little beast, which was precipitated into the amazed major's lap as the men came to some sort of attention.

"We've arrested the deserter, surr," said the corporal. "And the thirty shillings reward is ours, if it plase yer honour—though, th' saints know, we loved him loike a child widhout that."

Three hours later, while the gallant five, flushed by the reward and other things, were making the canteen rock, a very big major and a no smaller adjutant tiptoed into the former's bedroom. For a space they regarded a little, furry ball, Pluck by name, rolled up and asleep on the spotless white pillow.

"He ought to be shot," the adjutant whispered. "He has set half the game preservers of the country by the ears, and—well, he has broken his parole, you know."

"Shoot him, then," grunted the major, "if ye dare. Only don't ask me to face seven hundred first-class —— in open mutiny on parade to-morrow morning, if ye do."

Then they tiptoed out again, these long, lean warriors. Brave as they were, they dare not shoot Pluck, Pluck who had broken his parole, and was the darling of his regiment.

After all, they were very much men, peculiar animals, peculiar as he who slept on the major's pillow and gave no explanation for his wrong-doings at all, at all. Their god was Pluck, and Pluck represented pluck, not only to them, but, as the major had said, to seven hundred first-class —— as well.

Plants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

The Great Procession

HERE is a still Sunday morning. The sun is bright and the air is still, the distance hazy. The poppies are out, and the hollyhocks are coming out, the mulberries ripening rapidly, and the little figs fast becoming big figs. There is a feeling of growth and of new life all about. The grass is browning, and in the field over the way the hay is in the shock. On the sidewalk a child who stutters is gathering poppies, and to the next-door cottage a machine has this moment driven up, bringing a doctor.

All yesterday doctors came and went again, brought by the woman who lives there that they might use whatever of skill they may have to combat the walk of old man Death. Within a little room on the north side of the house, its window visible from where I sit to write to you, an old, old woman lies upon a bed. At this moment her daughter, herself the mother of five children, among them the child who laughs and gathers red poppies, stuttering, is combing out her old mother's gray hair. The doctor will in a moment be hastening away to go to the help of another woman, who, by this time tomorrow, will also be a mother.

Soon the old woman whose hair is being combed out now by her troubling daughter will be as are the poppies of last Summer.

The sun, bright and birth-giving to flower and to grasses, and bringing laughter to the children, shines as a great gold lamp upon the night-time of an old woman's life. For her it is evening when no flower longer may bloom, and no grass grow green for her footstep longer. Tomorrow she will be standing behind the curtain, the sun's lamp behind her, and a greater radiancy of morn before her face—who knows?

There is perhaps a radiancy where no sun needs to shine—a radiancy that is,. and always will be, a light not given by star or by moon, or by sun—the light whence the lesser suns and stars have taken their lightness? I do not know. The old woman, sighing in anguish at departing, the poppy-picking child, the poppies—none of them can say; yet each seems in some mysterious manner to reflect a light that is from a source yet brighter and yet wider than the old earth's sun.

One needs not to go far afield to find the mystery of life, for it is here in little corners of little places. No imperial throne-room holds more majesty than holds the wayside

cottage beneath the warming sun. Pomps are but as the futile stutterings of a speech-bound humanity, hindrances to laughter and real speech. I would that there were none. I would that each king and prince and high aristocrat might be brought low to toil amid the hot-faced laborers, that they might learn of something real and true.

No one knows anything save that the poppies will fall when poppy-time is over. No doctor shall stay the walk of old man Death. No one has yet ever peered from behind that closed door to whisper a word of what lies beyond it.

If at the end of the walk toward that door there lies naught save forgetfulness is it not enough to just have lived? Enough just to have known one's fellows and to have loved them, and to have been a little loved of them? Must man be forever striving for a prize? For a reward for work accomplished? Is not the work done, enough? Is not the reward the knowledge of that work done as best one may have done it? What brighter beauty may there ever be than the happy beauty of the forlorn hope—to help a brother and to die? Is that not enough? It ought to be.

In so far as men preach to men of reward, and of a hereafter based upon the merits of today, for just so long must all mankind go stuttering toward the last dark door whence there is not a returning.

When men preach to one another "Live for the sake of living—man for manhood's sake—let that be the guerdon," then will there be a Grail worth the living for and dying for.

They tell me that the saints stand in glory.

They do not tell me of those illimitable myriads who have dwelt in savagery through their mortal lives and died in savagery. They say no word of any save of the ones who have believed as they themselves believe—picturing an adulatory god who himself loves adulation. They make their god a being for strong men to despise and loathe—a god who calls for self worship, who cries forever—

"Praise me—I am the great I am."

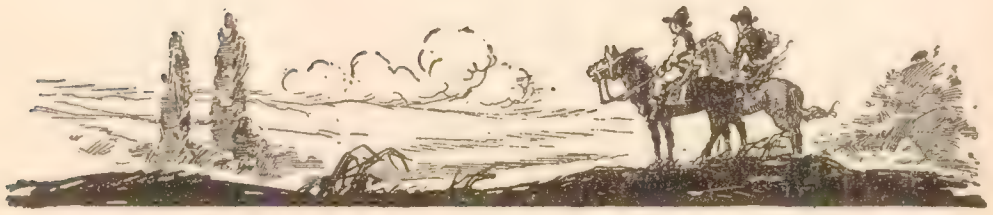
The upward striving spirit of humanity is my God—the spirit that cares naught for a hereafter but lives in the today for the bright sake of this today. No god, if god there be, will judge the one who would live for the glad sake of living, forgetful of rewards and of tinsel crowns.

"I would be a pillar in the temple of my God," says one.

"I would be a little sun ray to bring a brightness to a brother's pain," say I.

And I would leave the rest be ——, trusting God to be greater than his preachers, and more of a man than to wish me forever to bow to him.

I will live for the today—caring naught for the reward save in so much as I am here rewarded by the smiles upon my brothers' lips, and when I am gone remembered of them for a gentle while with happy thinking.



A Complete Novelette by William Byron Mowery

TYRO AND TYRANT

Author of "The Scout," "Mannikin Talk," etc.

LIEUTENANT STEFAN YANOVSKY stood in the prow of his *bidarra*, which was nose aground in the sand. His four men rested on their oars, waiting his word to pull for his ship, the *Sv. Ioann Predtecha*. Before departing, the lieutenant looked about him; quietly, deeply satisfied with duty done well, beyond his hopes.

The young Russian was tall and handsome, and polished as only St. Petersburg knew how to polish its naval officers in the great tradition of Catherine II. On the wild coast of Russian America, among savages and fur traders, he was a gentleman still, for good breeding was his birthright. His men stood in awe of his quiet fearlessness; yet he had no aggressive lust for power, no personal ambition.

Plainest, but in a sense the subtlest of all his traits was a rare warm-heartedness; a true Russian brotherliness toward his men, savage and Cossack alike; a deep understanding of their hard lives, and a sympathy for their troubles. The highest attribute of the ideal missionary is not religious dogmatism but this same trait of human insight and compassion.

The beach was scattered with a hundred kaiaks, a sea-otter hunting fleet manned by five-score Aleuts and captained by seven Cossack *promyshlenik.** Grouped about fires, the natives were eating and talking and preparing for the winter's hunt that would start on the morrow. But their talk was no longer mutinous, as it had been before Yanovsky came. They were content; they trusted the young lieutenant; they had confidence in his pledged word that he would stand between them and the extortionate tyranny of the Great Company.

One by one the Cossack leaders of the fleet, which was to scour a long strip of British Columbia coast that winter, stepped up and shook Yanovsky's hand. He had a "God keep you," and a strong clasp for each. They knotted about his *bidarra*,* loath to see him leave.

"Zplaa!" ejaculated a squat Cossack in an undertone to another *promyshlenik*. "Why isn't he *Glavnago Pravitelia* of the Company, instead of that dukelet lately sent from St. Petersburg?"

"Ho! Why? The ——'s harvest must be reaped, brother," was the sour answer. "If Yanovsky were chief manager there would be no uprising this winter. He would cheat the —— out of many a soul along this coast— But lend an arm; he wants to push off."

Before the reluctant hands could shove the *bidarra* clear, Yanovsky suddenly stopped them. A Kolosh warrior, running swiftly, had broken out of a woods and was gesturing as he hurried down the landwash. Fatigued and gaunt, he showed he had traveled fast and far, by sea-canoe and shore trail. The Cossacks made way for him.

"I am Tnegas," he reported briefly.

*Russian professional hunters, chiefly Cossacks.

*A large deck-boat usually made of skins.

"Come from Nova Archangelsk.* With message."

Yanovsky pulled the paper from its hollow-stick envelope. The message, stamped officially, was short and emphatic.

To Lieutenant Yanovsky:
Cease your work of placating the hunting fleets. Return with all diligence to Nova Archangelsk.
HAGEMEISTER, G.P.

Puzzled by this command, which halted him with his urgent mission only half completed, Yanovsky stepped out of the boat and took the Kolosh aside.

"What has happened at Nova Archangelsk?" he queried.

"Nothing yet!" Tnegas answered. "Trouble, worse. That is all."

"You've something else to say," Yanovsky observed keenly. "What is it?"

"Another message."

"Let me have it. Where is it?"

"On my tongue's end, which is sore from repeating it often to myself."

Parrot-like, showing that he understood not a syllable of the strange language, Tnegas recited half a dozen sentences. Yanovsky stepped back a pace in amazement. The verbal message was in German, queer sounding on the Kolosh's lips. But the news itself was more surprizing still:

"The *Bobrik* with cargo of a million in furs was lost at Goreloi in the Aleutians. Use this information to your own advantage. Go there. Do not call in at Nova Archangelsk."

Into Yanovsky's astounded ears the Kolosh parroted the sentences twice more. They varied not a syllable; there was no mistake. So dazing the news, Yanovsky at first could not grasp all of it.

Phrases of the message ran through his head. A million roubles in furs lost—lost how? At Goreloi in the middle of the Aleutian chain—what was the *Bobrik* doing on that dangerous northern passage to Kamchatka? Use information to his own advantage—how use it? To what advantage? Not call in at Nova Archangelsk—why not?

"Who sent this second message?" he asked at length.

"A friend," the Kolosh answered, noncommittal.

Plainly his lips were sealed: no help or hint from him.

Yanovsky deliberated. Who at Nova Archangelsk spoke German? For one, old Baranof, long years chief manager of the Great Company and tyrant of the Pacific, but now deposed by Hagemeister of the Imperial Navy. The old rheumatic bear lived on at the citadel, unable to tear himself away from the company he had founded and the wilderness capital he had built. For another, Baranof's daughter Pavlusha, who had a German governess. But she, Yanovsky had good reason to believe, would have added a personal word to the message. Then, several Polish exiles—convicts leased to the company from Siberian mines. The Poles were friendly. In their behalf Yanovsky had several times interceded with Hagemeister, to whom a political prisoner was still a convict. Probably one of them had sent the news.

"When did the *Bobrik* leave Nova Archangelsk?" he asked Tnegas.

"Three moons ago. Shortly after you left."

"When did word come of the loss, and how?"

"By Aleut sea-runners, one moon and a split-moon ago."

"Did the great white chief go to hunt for the lost ship, and return empty-handed?"

Tnegas nodded. But to all further questioning he was blank.

Into the message Yanovsky now could read several things. The priceless cargo stood a chance of being recovered, or why should he be told to go to Goreloi? His informant knew something which Hagemeister didn't; held, more than likely, the key to the recovery. Hagemeister, having failed to find the cargo by himself, would not send out his subordinate. He was too haughty, too cocksure of his own infallibility, to do that. Hence the recall to Nova Archangelsk had nothing to do with the fur bales. The trouble fomenting at the capital must be getting desperate; Hagemeister must want help.

Yanovsky's puzzle was sore. The hint about his own advantage weighed not at all in his quick, hot debate with himself.

There was a flat order to return to Nova Archangelsk. Hagemeister, a strict disciplinarian, brooked no slightest disobedience. The gathering storm of discontent might be threatening to break out any day. The previous tyranny of Baranof had lashed the several factions almost to open rebellion; and Hagemeister, his successor, instead of trying to smooth out the troubles,

*Seat of the Russian American Fur Company. Now Sitka.

had only made them worse by his ignorance of trade problems and by his attempted reforms that were worse than the evils they supplanted.

But there was the chance to bring back the priceless cargo. Whoever had sent the verbal message must surely have sent it

with friendly intent and with certain knowledge that the furs stood a real likelihood of being recovered. The loss would be disastrous to the company, which already was in desperate financial straits. It would catapult Hagemeister from his office and leave the company with no guiding hand at all. It might be the spark to ignite the smoulder of rebellion.

In short space Yanovsky came to his decision. He put a hand to the Kolosh's shoulder.

"You can keep secrets," he observed with a dry smile. "Here is one to keep. Return to Nova Archangelsk with the paper you brought me. To the great white chief say that you arrived here too late; that I had passed on south beyond your reach. To the person who gave you the other message, say I am off this day for the Aleutians!"

AT GRAY dawn the *Sv. Ioann Predtecha** moved ahead from her night anchorage of ten fathoms. Furlong by cautious furlong, the little ninety-ton vessel felt her way through treacherous reefs toward the eastern Cape of Goreloi. A woolly fog shrouded the ship and hid the low coast from sight. Cold sleet showers tore lanes through the fog and chilled the dank air. It was a fine Aleutian morning.

At four fathoms sounding, Lieutenant Yanovsky again ordered anchor tossed. With four men in a *bidarra*, he pulled ahead for the point. He did not know what information or clue he was to pick up at Goreloi; his move was a blind stab at nothing. But he reasoned that a hunting party of natives would be gathered at the point to await the fog lifting. From them he might glean something worth knowing; something to start with.

His reasoning was correct. Two dozen Aleuts, a single-hole kaiak to each, were waiting back on a sand ridge. Against the chill of the morning they were warming themselves by lighting patches of matted grass and walking over them. Out in the floating kelp-fields, the "sea-otter's cabbage," a party of this size would hunt as a single unit, keeping together and chasing a single sea-otter until they exhausted and speared it. One a day was good luck; a fifty-mile chase not rare.

Docile, patient, and born sea-rovers, these Aleuts were the mainstay of the Russian American Company. The American Indian tribes, especially the powerful Kolosh, were too independent and haughty to make good servants. They bartered with the company as free tribes, whereas the Aleuts were paid—nominally, not actually.

The company's ships recruited hunting fleets among the Islands and scattered them along the American coast from the Yukon's delta to Santa Barbara. In their single-hole kaiaks they scoured fiord and floating kelp fields in storm or fog or lazy weather. The mainland tribes, incensed at their furs being taken by alien hunters, often fell upon and butchered the hapless, harmless Aleuts. But the profits were enormous.

Yanovsky quickly spotted the chief hunter of the party, took him aside, and questioned him about the wreck. Willingly, keeping nothing back apparently, the Aleut told his story.

It was simple, meager of information. As he listened, the lieutenant frowned in vexation.

A broken hatch, a spar, a smashed deck boat and a body had washed up at the point one morning after a storm. A *promyshlenik* identified the wreckage as belonging to the *Bobrik*, and saw it pointed to an unmistakable disaster. Word was relayed by Aleut sea-runners to Nova Archangelsk. A month later Hagemeister came in the *Kutusof*, his warship, and cruised for several days among the small uninhabited islands east of Goreloi, where the *Bobrik* must have run afoul of a reef. Not a sign had he found of the furs or ship.

Yanovsky tried adroit questions; tried bribery; but the Aleut reacted to neither. Disappointed and not knowing what step

*St. John the Forerunner.

to take next, the lieutenant walked back to his Cossacks who were breakfasting on seal beef with the natives.

"Something's astir here, Stefan Yanovsky," said Dianof, one of his most trusted men.

"What?"

"An older Aleut twice asked me your name. Then he spoke a few words with a young hunter, who edged off into the fog while you were talking."

"Ha! We will wait and see what is astir."

The fog lifted in an hour, but the Aleuts did not leave for their hunt. In two hours the young hunter came back, panting and sweaty. He delivered something to the chief hunter, who brought it to Yanovsky.

It was a note in Russian charactry. The lieutenant read it with starting eyes. He could have shouted.

To Lieutenant Yanovsky:

Upon your pledged word to protect my life with yours if need be, I shall tell you about the loss of the *Bobrik*. If you will not pledge, I can trust *you* to say nothing about this message.

The note was unsigned. Realizing that here was the key which the informant at Nova Archangelsk knew about, Yanovsky hastily wrote his utmost pledge and added the single word: "Come."

At noon the young hunter was back again. With him a strange figure, dressed and disguised as an Aleut. Yanovsky looked up at the man sharply; looked at him twice. Then he jumped to his feet.

"Larion Bef!"

It was the captain of the wrecked ship; scarred, crudely bandaged, himself looking worse than a wreck.

Aside, out of earshot, they sat down together.

"From the beginning, Larion" Yanovsky bade him, "though my ears itch to hear about the cargo's whereabouts."

Larion Bef moved a bandage away from his jaw. He was forty-five, born to the fur trade, sea-battered, ugly, surly—the antithesis of the young lieutenant. Yet between them, before Yanovsky went south as peace-maker among the hunting fleets, a warm friendship had sprung up.

"Nova Archangelsk is ——'s garden now!" he barked. "The dukelet is tobogganing to a crash. Along with him goes the company and all its poor ——. The Kolosh will not hunt and bring in provisions. The convict helpers have forgotten Siberian mines and knouts, and are ready to turn the guns inside the citadel. Even the Aleuts refuse to go out with the fleets. Only a handful of men from the *Kutusof* are still loyal. All this is the dukelet's work!"

"Not quite all," Yanovaky objected, in justice to his chief. "Old Baranof started the trouble. His tyranny stirred danger which only a master hand could down. Neither of them can rule the territory. Hagemeister is a sea man; none better in the Imperial Navy."

"But at managing the company he is a tyro," Larion Bef growled. "There was a day, now past, when the tyrant was needed. But the tyro never will be.

"Did Hagemeister first come and study the trade problems? No! He came with a headful of theories and reforms, mapped out by the cushion-bottomed directors at St. Petersburg. He is obeying the court ukases to the letter. Look at one instance: A Boston ship came with foodstuffs to trade for furs. But a ukase forbids such trading and Hagemeister sent the Boston ship away. Now the garrison faces starvation for the winter. Baranof made his own ukases; —— help him if he hadn't!"

"But the cargo?" Yanovsky checked him. "How came you to have a million roubles in fur on your ship? Why did you take this foggy northern passage?"

"Why? The dukelet wanted to make a grand showing at the start of his rule. He wanted to send back to Okhotsk the greatest cargo in company annals. And in the shortest time, by the shortest route. But the prices on Canton market already were low; this shipment would have crashed them to nothing. Let me tell it quickly. My head hammers to think of it.

"East of here fifty versts I was laid aboard by three cursed *shitikas*.* Pirates. We bloodied the sea while it lasted, but they were four to our one. They knifed my crew, took the fur bales, scuttled the *Bobrik*, but kept me alive, like a monkey on a chain. Why? To get information about other cargoes.

"I told them that a second rich ship was coming in my path. It gave me time. They waited between a couple of islets. I escaped in a kayak made of willows and hides. A hunting party found me and brought me in to Goreloi.

*Small sea-going craft built like an ordinary deck-boat and sometimes decked over.

"Why didn't I send word to Hagemeister? My skin would be worth a rotten sable's if he laid hands on me. The loss was his fault but my blame. Besides, I am the only living man who knows he ordered me to take this northern passage. How would that fact look on his naval record? But I sent word to Nova Archangelsk and the word was relayed to you."

"The cargo?" Yanovsky insisted.

Larion Bef smoothed a place in the sand and drew a large crude chart.

"I had ears what time they held me chained. This is the Asiatic shore, south of Okhotsk Sea. This, the Gulf of Tartary; this, Saghalien; this Karafuto; these dots, the pirate islands."

Yanovsky studied the chart, his mind harking back to his nautical maps.

"But there are no islands at that place," he objected.

"Your maps are old. That is the earthquake region. Islands come and go. The pirates and the cargo are there."

Feeling the other's eyes upon him, searching if he dared to pursue, Yanovsky rose and walked away to himself. He had good cause to debate. The *Sv. Ioann Predtecha* carried a scant crew of twenty; her four guns were small; the Asiatic waters dangerous at that season; the pirates certain to be nested in numbers.

The whole venture was worse than perilous. But he could wait for no orders; could not delay to gather help, or the pirates would have time to dispose of the cargo at the Amoor River fairs—Khabarovka and other border cities. Thought of the stacks upon stacks of sea-otter skins which had lain in the citadel magazine awaiting a higher market at Canton, swayed him to a quick decision.

"There are a dozen *promyshleniki* on this Goreloi. Find them and bring them to Three Saints Cape, Larion Bef," he ordered tersely, while the captain's eyes gleamed. "We will swing down to Attoo and take on two guns from the *Ostrog* there. Then, *avos nyebos, da kaknyibut*." *

SEAWARD from the *Sv. Ioann Predtecha* and faintly orange in the late evening sun lay the three small islands which Larion Bef's thumb had unerringly charted on the sand at Goreloi. To the right was the Asiatic coast, backed by the Amoor River hinterland where barter obtained between twenty wandering nations and smuggling was a profession before Mohammed prophesied.

Northward four swift days sailing were the Kuril Reefs, where many a fur ship whose epitaph in chronicles is "lost at sea" was in reality plundered and scuttled by the fur-pirates—mixed crews of Siberian convicts escaped; of free-lance traders driven from the legitimate sea by the Great Company's monopoly; and of small brown men from the reed patches of the swampy Japanese islands and from the coastal mountains of Chosen.

In the lookout barrel Lieutenant Yanovsky searched the islands with his glasses. They were a tiny, volcanic-born archipelago paralleling the coast; having reefs on the north end, the three islands in the middle; then dwindling to breakers again and the open sea. The middle and largest island was six versts long and half as many wide. A little crater on its backbone puffed intermittently, like a hunchback smoking a pipe.

Before he came down from the lookout, Yanovsky thought out his plans precisely. The reefs, even the largest, washed over during heavy gales. Hence the pirates had to be on one of the islands, if Larion Bef's ears—one missing from a saber slash in the *Bobrik's* scuttling—had heard aright. Likely the outlanders were nested on the largest of the three; the small ones seemed to have no safe harbor or cove for even a small *shitika* to hide in.

It was too late to attack that day. Such a move would only warn the pirates and give them a chance to escape in the night. The brigantine bore straight and innocently south along the coast till nightfall, then swung east and north; and at earliest gray of the next morning drew near the first small island.

Its slopes already were clothed with ragged clumps of heather, devil's club, and wild wheat tussocks. The black Kamchatka lily bloomed in riot. The island's lower reaches were typical hot marshes—blue mud flats, bare of vegetation, steamy, impassable.

In a *bidarra* with eight men heavily armed, Yanovsky circled the island; landed on a rocky promontory that made a sort of causeway over the marsh; and warily searched the slopes and crest. He found

*Old proverb: "If luck be with us, we will pull through."

no hint of habitation. From the condition of barnacles still clinging on the rocks, he judged the island to be a score of years old.

Sailing twelve versts south, he searched the third island without getting a sign; and then returned to the largest.

Roughly it was shaped like a man. The head, where the little live crater puffed,

was a wild knoll; a tumble of lava rock, twisted shrubbery, rank caney weeds, and gorges. On three sides of the knoll a high perpendicular cliff of igneous rock beat off the sea. On the fourth side, a wide belt of blue marsh stretched across the "neck" and connected, or rather separated, the knoll from the rest of the island. The thin mud of the marsh was heated by the same submarine fire that smoked through the hot crater. Geysers of steam bubbled up; the whole marsh seethed. The knoll was clearly inaccessible to anything without wings.

The dark waters about the island sneaked treacherously over hidden reefs. Without danger of ripping her keel, the brigantine could not stand in close enough to search the locked coves for hidden *shilikas*. Yanovsky gave orders for two *bidarras* to be manned by eight men each, with two pieces of musketry to a man, and a half-pound falconet to each boat.

"You stay on the *Sv. Ioann*," he directed Larion Bef. "And follow our boats as we circle the island. If we flush the pirates and they show fight, we will pull back to the ship and let them try gunnery with us."

Larion Bef growled approval. His face puckered with a seaman's joy at having a ship under his orders again.

His *bidarra* leading, Yanovsky stood in to a hundred yards of the shore. Keeping that distance, he turned north. His men rowed slowly, while he scrutinized the slopes for signs of habitation and the deep water coves for small craft. The search passed up the east side of the island by noon; and started across the north end. The brigantine stood by a mile out, skillfully maneuvering against awkward, shifting winds.

Along this north end a steep slope ran down from the island's crest and ended in a rock wall which fringed the coast. At one place the wall was broken. A narrow arm reached back and curved out of sight. Yanovsky stopped the *bidarra*, and looked long at this arm and at the jumble of shrubs and rocks on the slope above it. Seeing nothing suspicious, he ordered the boats to edge in cautiously.

The water close in was deep, safe, and the waves glassy smooth. Silently the boats glided into the mouth of the indenture, from which point the whole reach of the arm would come into sight.

Like a flash the ominous stillness was shattered. Dianof in the prow of Yanovsky's boat leaped to his feet with a yell, and pointed into the cove. From a covert on the slope above came a flash. A heavy bullet whizzed past the lieutenant and spatted into the forehead of the man behind him. The *promyshlenik* pitched across the gunwale. A comrade, knowing him dead, slid him to a quick burial.

"*Kzum!*" the comrade hissed through tight lips.

He jerked up his long flint-lock and fired. Out of the rock tangle a brown figure plunged forward on its face. It did not move; did not tremble.

A small Chinese cannon hidden on the slope hissed and boomed. The ball knocked into the fraction of a wave between the two boats.

"Back out!" Yanovsky cried sharply. "One ball will sink a boat. Back out!"

On the left slope a *cr-aa-ck* of musketry, like a splitting tree, took the words from his mouth. Slugs *zip-zipped* over, kicking up white jets of spume on swells beyond. Simultaneously came flashes from half a dozen points on the hill-slope. Two men in Yanovsky's boat cried out with wounds, but pulled with the others to scull the boats beyond musket range.

In less than two minutes the cannon hissed and boomed again. The ball droned overhead, easily visible. Yanovsky spotted the rock jumble from which the smoke puffed up.

"What did you see in the harbor, Dianof?" he asked when they could take breath.

"Three craft, *shitikas*, two of them decked. I had no time to see more."

"Nor the rest of us to see half as much," the lieutenant commented. "Our unappeased curiosity is another reason for our returning shortly and bettering their compliments."

"Even shorter than you think, Stefan Yanovsky," Dianof observed. "Look!"

The *Sv. Ioann Predtecha* was clipping straight toward the *bidarras* at a rash speed, blithely reckless of possible knife-edge reefs in her path. Larion Bef had seen the skirmish. Bulldog that he was, flat orders and perils under keel could not hold him from tearing into the fight.

Yanovsky stayed his breath as the ship bore down on a line of white water, tacked, shot through without a tremor, and came on. The *bidarras* held. The brigantine reached them, circled gracefully as a pinnace of twenty tons, and stopped.

"WHAT now, Stefan Yanovsky?" came a bull bellow from her deck.

"You've brought her over the worst danger. We will board and go into the harbor."

The boats were hoisted on deck. Around the prow Yanovsky set up thin iron shelter plates which the brigantine carried for protection against spears and arrows of war canoes on the American coast. Axes, swords, and long-shafted pikes were piled handily; netting stretched; fresh-loaded muskets passed out. Those of the crew who were sailors and old sea-fighters tied kerchiefs around their heads. The *promyshleniki*, not a whit less brave, "little brothered" each other in undertones.

"With long swords and pikes we will reach over the machetes of the fiends, will we not, little brother?" voiced the confidence that ran through the tense groups.

Yanovsky called Larion Bef to him.

"Do you, with the best of the sailors, maneuver the *Sv. Ioann*. My plan is to edge in till we can see the *shitikas*. If we sink them, we have the pirates trapped. But they are four to our one. Do not let them board if we can sink the craft without. You handle the ship. I will look to the fight. You understand?"

The *Bobrik* captain nodded and licked his lips. Yanovsky hurried fore to the crews of the two twelve-pounders.

"That clump above the reddish rock," he pointed out, "hides a cannon. When we get within good range, spray it with cannister to drive the gunners away. When we get within a long arrow flight, knock the cannon out with a solid ball. Can you do it, Latroffsky?"

The gunner snarled at him for the question. Yanovsky laughed.

The *Sv. Ioann Predtecha* started in.

Against an indigo sky and sea, the slopes and the frowning rocks stood sharply etched as a picture on canvas, and as silent. Not even a sea bird clackered past. The black patches of lilies were a threat of death to the bold vessel.

It came within cannon range. The two forward guns flung cannister into the clump. At good musket range they shelled it with solid ball. Nothing stirred. Not a pistol shot answered.

Yanovsky calculated swiftly. He had expected a fight, in which his superior gunnery would even the long odds of men. What was the pirate strategy, their plan? For their silence meant some cunning. To entice him in where the brigantine would be becalmed? To lay aboard him with three vessels and four men to his one? It meant defeat. Death to his crew. He changed his own strategy and shouted an order to Larion Bef.

The *Sv. Ioann* veered slowly off, while there was yet time. At the move a brazen shout of derision went up ashore. Yells and commotion where there had been silence. Out of the cove came the three *shitikas*, hauled along by cable lines and pulleys till they cleared the entrance and their sails caught. They swarmed with monkey-like figures—small, shaggy men from the Kom coastal mountains; brutish outlaws from south Karafuto; the lowest, most savage castes of all the Gulf of Tartary. The vessels bowled down upon the brigantine, which made little effort to outdistance them.

The largest and swiftest of the *shitikas* closed in and tossed grappling irons while the other two were still a musket shot

distant. Forty men swarmed over the netting, yelling, frenzied to kill. Yanovsky with eighteen Cossacks met the onset.

Pistols were fired point-blank and dropped for ax or pike. The shock of the defense met the shock of the charge, with a shudder of metal, a tumult of bellowed oaths, the shriek of men death-struck, the surge back and forth across the bloodied planking.

At the stern where the wave of wet, slimy bodies splashed over, a towering Cossack rode a spar, like a horse on his native steppes, swinging ax with one hand, with the other impaling men on his pike and hurling them back—till a javelin whisped through the air and thrust him through. He grinned in silly amazement, swayed, toppled, fell.

Yanovsky, with Dianof and Latroffsky, fighting like maddened panthers, held a knot of pirates away from the aft guns. They noted the onset fury slackening; saw its cause—help coming from the other two boats closing in. With their long swords they hewed their way through the cordon to the center deck. At their rally shout the *promyshleniki* rushed. By sheer strength, abetted by swinging, murderous axes, they hurtled the pirates back, hurtled them overboard, to the half-deck below, into the water, irresistibly.

But still the *shitika's* teeth clung to the brigantine. The other two boats were closing in, one on each side. The leaders on the grappled craft lashed their men to drive them back aboard the ship.

A Russian gunner, coughing from a mortal thrust through his lungs, seized a keg of powder, smashed a hole in the top, ran aft, and vaulted clear to the *shitika* amidships. A hoarse cry of horror from the *Sv. Ioann;* a frenzied groan from the pirate vessel. A wave of brown forms surged over the gunner, slashing life out of him—but not until he had thrust pistol into the keg and fired.

The explosion rocked the *Sv. Ioann* and rolled her defenders into the scuppers. A ghastly débris rained upon her deck. Where the *shitika* had been was only a swirl, a red roil.

So much swifter was the fight than any telling of it, that the brigantine was cleared before the other two pirate craft reached grappling distance. Larion Bef clapped on canvas, to give Yanovsky a breathing space and chance to take count.

Four Cossacks were dead; two wounded desperately. Scarce a one of the others escaped without cuts or stabs from short blades. Eighteen of the enemy, some breathing slightly, were tossed overboard by the hot-angered Cossacks, in spite of Yanovsky's orders. Amidships the Russian dead were covered with a tarpaulin; the wounded were carried tenderly below.

Yanovsky, his face aflame, found Larion Bef.

"Who starts the wolf pack needs feet of wind," quoted the captain, between bellows for more canvas.

"Not out to sea!" Yanovsky ordered. "They must follow us. Down the west coast of their island. Slower. Let them seem to overtake us."

The *Bobrik* Captain nodded. He understood the move.

Undaunted by the fate of their one craft, the pirates gave hot chase. Their secret hiding, their rendezvous, had been discovered; the brigantine must be destroyed or their fate was foregone.

Two miles from the secret harbor and a mile from land, they closed up again within musket range. At Yanovsky's sudden order the *promyshleniki* crashed musket fire into the crowded decks. Besides directing the fight, Yanovsky himself worked one of the falconets lashed to a davit. Latroffsky's tilted guns lunged through the wind-water-line of the *shitikas*.

The first wither of musketry showed the pirates what Yanovsky's strategy was; showed them the *Sv. Ioann* was playing them out to their own destruction. They swerved toward land, with water gushing in, despite canvas patching lowered outside. The brigantine swung after them. Pursued in a split-wink became pursuer.

Straight as the wind allowed, the *shitikas* drove toward the island. No time was given them to regain the cove shelter. The guns pounded on their heels. It was a question if they could even make the land. Had the race been half a verst longer, both craft would have sunk with their whole crews. They drove headlong at the beach; grounded hard and fast, while shoal water forced the brigantine to veer off. The pirates leaped into the water and ran to hiding ashore, abandoning their vessels perforce.

Deliberately Larion Bef worked his ship back to cannon range. Deliberately Latroffsky splintered the *shitikas* beyond hope

of ever floating again. A shout of triumph went up from the brigantine. A defiant answer rolled back from the island.

YANOVSKY ordered food and strong wine brought on deck. Afterward, lacking priest, he performed the Greek services for five men—for the four under the tarpaulin and for the gunner who had leaped overboard with a keg of powder under his arm and a pistol in his hand.

There were still three hours of daylight. Yanovsky called a council of leading men in the cabin. Some of them argued for immediate landing under cover of the guns, and hot pursuit of the pirates. Larion Bef wanted to stand by and starve them out. To neither plan would the lieutenant agree. He was averse to further bloodshed, if it were avoidable. He had to get back to Nova Archangelsk without wasting weeks in a blockade. In the end his plans carried.

A signal shot was fired. Dianof was lowered in a kaiak and sent ashore with a white flag. From Yanovsky to the pirate leader he carried a terse message: if the *Bobrik* cargo was surrendered, the pirates would be put ashore on the mainland.

The Cossack beached and walked a dozen paces up the landwash. A tall white leader, hawk-featured and unmistakably of noble blood, came out to meet him. They exchanged brief words; parted. Dianof came back to the ship and reported.

The pirate's answer hinted at a time when the legion imps of hell would don seal-skin *parkas* to keep from freezing.

"So be it!" Yanovsky concurred, when he heard the challenge. "They will shortly see if they need *parkas* there."

The *Sv. Ioann* drew off and anchored for the night in twelve fathoms. At dawn the next day she moved in again. Under cover of the guns, a *bidarra* plied between ship and shore. Nineteen *promyshleniki* were landed. Each had two pistols, a musket, and long sword swinging against bare knees. Five men under Larion Bef remained on the ship. The *bidarra* was sent back, lest the pirates should seize it and attack the vessel.

Barring ambush, the landing party felt themselves equal to the heavy pirate odds. With solid ground beneath their landsman's feet, with their favorite weapon, a long rifle, in their hands, and with long swords which would outreach the short blades of the enemy when musketry had broken the charge and whittled down their numbers, they were tingling for the finish fight.

Holding his force compact, Yanovsky slowly worked up toward the island's crest. He avoided the rock tangles and gorges, keeping to clear ground where he could see for a pistol shot in every direction. As additional warning, a scout was sent ahead and one to each side.

Freshly-worn paths and scattered signs gave clear token that the uncharted island was the well-head of that particular band of outlanders. Momentarily the party expected assault. The first, tense half hour passed. The second went. The *promyshleniki* reached the crest. Along the bare ridge they traveled more quickly. Yanovsky kept an eye backward for the ship, half believing the pirates were scheming to take it.

But the brigantine rolled quietly in the indigo troughs and the party tramped on unmolested. They reached the north end where the fight had started. Dianof, again volunteering to thrust his nose into danger, scouted down the slope and returned with the report that not a human being, much less three score, were hidden below. He had found the demolished cannon and the covert in which the pirates had lurked. But they were gone.

Less wary now, the party swung across the north end, searching it thoroughly. Then south along the east slope, without the fortune of a fight. Then across the neck and up the west slope with similar luck.

All during the afternoon the mystery deepened. Every possible hiding place had been searched. The outlanders had disappeared.

Where? The *promyshleniki* discussed the puzzle as they tramped back to the landing an hour before dusk. To sea? Their boats had been destroyed and they had not had time to fashion others. The island was their rendezvous, their well-head; they had hidden the peltry there. Even if they had made kaiaks and escaped, they could not have taken the peltry with them. Where the fur bales were, there were the fur pirates. But where! Each Cossack asked his "little brother," in the name of Little Mother Volga and a lengthy list of saints.

Yanovsky, who had strode apart from

his men, to think, bade them stay together at the landing. Taking only Dianof with him, he walked casually across the "neck" along a worn footpath which bordered the hot marsh.

"Have you laid your guess where the pirates have gone, Stefan Yanovsky?"

"A guess but only a guess. Keep your eyes ahead. See that worn path a biscuit toss in front of us? It crosses the island to the sheltered cove. But here it ends abruptly at the marsh edge, where the marsh is narrowest. Why?"

"How could they cross there?" Dianof asked incredulously. "See!"

He picked up a dry leafy shrub and tossed it out on the marsh. The leaves smoked and took fire.

"The ——'s own pinnace could not pass over that strip. And the ledge on the other three sides of the knoll is twice higher than the mast of the *Sv. Ioann.*"

"Nevertheless," Yanovsky argued, "they are not on the island. They have crossed this marsh to the knoll, or else they have taken wings and flown away. Believe which you like. But note this path well. When darkness falls, you will need to find it without a torch."

They walked on to the other side casually, then back to the men.

Yanovsky gave orders, at which his *promyshleniki* wondered but for which he vouchsafed no explanation. The brigantine was towed in close and anchored. A camp was made on shore; canvas shelter put up; a fire built. The two *bidarras* were drawn up on the beach a bowshot away from the camp. One man was set to guard them. Food was cooked, wine served; and darkness fell upon tired men making ready to sleep.

But Yanovsky had other plans for them.

An hour after dark he took the ship's carpenter aside and gave him lengthy, explicit instructions. Then rousing his men silently, he sent nine of them back to the brigantine, with orders to rest until he came aboard. The other ten, save Dianof, he ordered to guard the remaining *bidarra* which was moved up the landwash from where it had been when darkness fell.

With the Cossack, he walked back to the marsh edge path. Silently, groping their way cautiously and slowly to keep from stepping into the mud that would bog a blanket, they crept inland and found the broad crest trail. There they stopped, crouched near the marsh, and waited.

A SHOAL of mackerel clouds scudded up from the southeast and shut out moonlight and star glimmer. Three hours after dark it began to rain. Queer blue flames, like St. Elmo's fire, danced over the marsh. Blazing whisps rose up and rode the wind out of sight. The night was slipping. Yanovsky cursed softly under his breath.

Dianof it was who suddenly stiffened, every muscle tense. He pointed out upon the marsh. Half-rose, quivering. Yanovsky drew him forcibly down and whispered an order for no word or move.

At first the lieutenant's eyes saw nothing in the murky gloom. Then vaguely a dim wraith-like object began to take outline. It looked like a huge worm, a dozen feet long, crawling over the mud, slowly, a foot or two at a step, but steadily, straight at the point where the two men crouched.

Though he was expecting just this apparition, Yanovsky felt his skin creeping. He sensed that Dianof might break.

"It is only a canoe," he whispered. "Let them land. We must capture it silently."

In the center of the crawling object were two black, upright patches. They took on human form as their weird craft came closer. By the light of a greenish mud-flame Yanovsky recognized two fur pirates, stocky white men, leaders of their brown pack. They drove their canoe alongside a solid rock and stepped out of it. The Russians drew their heavy brass-barreled pistols, rose, and leaped at them. Taken completely unawares, the pirates went down without an outcry or the semblance of a struggle, falling like logs when the pistol butts stunned them. They were bound and gagged before they stirred back to consciousness.

Hastily Yanovsky ran his hand over the canoe and examined it. Built of heavy green wood, protected outside by a sheeting of iron, it could traverse the impassable marsh with ease. It was a cunning piece of work, offering access to a rare pirate nest, an almost impregnable natural fortress.

"We must hurry," he spoke aloud. "This pair came across to reconnoiter, as I guessed they would. They meant to bring their men over, seize our *bidarras* while we slept, cut our throats, and capture the *Sv. Ioann.* Those on the knoll will become suspicious if

their leaders do not return within two hours at most."

They reached the *bidarra* quickly. Yanovsky explained the situation in half a dozen sentences and despatched six *promyshleniki* to carry the captured canoe back to a certain spot on the marsh edge path. He sent aboard for all his fighting strength, weapons, and the results of the carpenter's labor. Muskets and swords were sheathed in canvas to prevent clinking. In spite of darkness and need of silence the whole party and fighting gear were gathered at the chosen spot in half an hour.

The carpenter's labor turned out to be a small heavy boat like the pirate's own. The thin iron shelter sheets had been shaped to cover it and protect the wood.

Eleven thousand saints were called upon to bless the marvelous thing, the carpenter who had made it so hurriedly, the ingenuity of Stefan Yanovsky who had conceived it, and the whole night's venture that hung upon it.

Two trips and the party was across, even falconets, at a point a quarter-verst west of where the pirates were awaiting the return of their leaders. The ground was level and clear of shrubbery—as Yanovsky had chosen it the evening before. Posting sentries, he awaited the break of day.

The false dawn grayed objects near at hand; passed; the darkest hour waned, and dawn broke full, so suddenly that the men lying prone on the ground, looked blankly into one another's faces.

The weather had faired off. The day was silver clear, a day to make life precious to man. Looking about at his *promyshleniki*, every one of them valorous and careless of death yet simple-hearted as children, Yanovsky prayed silently for a peaceful surrender, before some of those who called him brother would die under a pirate knife to atone for Hagemeister's folly. But his prayer went unanswered, mayhap because his men were praying for a fight, a vengeance for their slain shipmates, and a quick end to the bloody work.

One hundred steps in front was a gorge that circled half about the place where the party waited. Behind that was thick shrubbery and rock tangle which clothed the rise to the crater top.

Yanovsky made final disposition; gave final orders.

"Let them cover half the distance to us. Then give them musketry. Two rounds. Save the pistols till they are within ten paces. It will check them for us to grasp ax and long sword."

Before the lieutenant could call out an offer to the pirates, as he had meant, Dianof rose, shot his pistol into the air, and shouted. They had short time to wait thereafter.

Out of the gorge on the left broke a knot of men, armed with pistols and cutlases. They came forward at a lope, grimly silent. The falconets hurtled slugs into them, but checked them not a bit. On the right another group lunged forward. Straight from the center came two dozen pirates, led by the tall white man who was a noble in all save his company. The three charges were planned to wash over the Russians at the same instant.

Half-way, their lines shivered under the wither of a musketry blast. A second round poured into them, decimated them, drew their pistol fire. But they came on, cutlases flashing in the first bright golden rays of the morning sun. The pistol volley was fired almost into their faces. It dropped half a score and for one split-second checked the rush. The *promyshleniki* grabbed sword and ax; shouted to the heavens; jumped from the firing crouch and, leg to leg, hit charge with charge.

Long swords reached over the short cutlases and found their sheaths in flesh. Axes arched and smashed down on kerchiefed heads. Dirks whizzed through the air. Musket and pistol smoke sucked into the turmoil, choking and blinding.

Where the two flank charges hit, the defenders held their ground. But where the middle knot of pirates crashed, the Cossacks broke. A *promyshlenik* whirled his ax in a glittering circle, charged with the cold fury of a Kenai bear, and stopped the brown stream from pouring through and engulfing the defenders. He went down decapitated by the pirate leader's sword. With a dagger in his shoulder and a cutlass slash beneath his arm-pit, Yanovsky saw the danger. He cleared himself by a two-handed swing of his long blade, and met the leader face to face.

Their fury gave them space. The battle hung. Each felt the other a master swordsman; felt the struggle would be decided by their blades. No flourishes, fencing; but thrusts and slashes, till their swords met

flush in mid air and the pirate's weapon was knocked out of his hand. He drew pistol, but quicker still, Yanovsky ran him through till the blade stood a foot out of his back.

The victor smiled, nodded, as the pirate leader fell. Then his own sword seemed suddenly heavy, his grasp nerveless. He stumbled forward, trying to lead the rally. Dianof pushed him aside with sweep of a huge arm, and himself led the charge upon the wavering pirates. The Cossacks leaped over the bodies that had fallen and crashed into the very center of the brown mass.

Yanovsky staggered to his feet to follow. His heart leaped to see the numbers were now even. He slipped in a puddle of gore and fell again. A cued pirate, spitted upon a pike, got to his knees and tried to saber him. Yanovsky's sword would not obey. He reached for his second pistol and fired point-blank. The split mouth blackened with powder smudge where the bullet hit; the pirate died across Yanovsky's unconscious form.

Dianof, crimson with his own blood and the blood—he swore later—of eight others, was pouring spirits into his leader's mouth when the lieutenant shuddered and opened his eyes. The *promyshleniki* were busy. Yanovsky looked his question.

"It is finished. We lost five men. The rest of us are more or less wounded. Latroffsky is dead. Popof, Kazinsky, Sulee, and Dedin. It is a marvel you are not."

"The pirate wounded?" Yanovsky asked suspiciously, trying to rise on his elbow.

"There were *none*."

"Stop that, Dianof!" he cried. "Stop that or I will sword you with my own hand."

"They are merely closing the eyes of the dead."

The lieutenant tried to rise and grasp his sword. His will snapped. He sank into the dark again.

It was Dianof who staunched his wounds crudely and carried him across the marsh and aboard to his cabin, scarce knowing if his commander were alive or dead; Dianof, who found the *Bobrik* fur in its cave, and in addition a rich prize haul for the crew of the *Sv. Ioann;* Dianof who brought them in two days' time across to the brigantine. It was Larion Bef who headed the ship across the Kuro Siwo, and pointed the "albatross alight on its prow" for Nova Archangelsk.

Yanovsky, with half a dozen grave wounds, fought with a fever of which two others of the wounded died. For a week he hovered between life and death while the brigantine was winded steadily eastward.

But what eleven thousand saints, daily invoked, could do was done. In their high council they evidently decided that Lieutenant Stefan Yanovsky was needed yet a while on earth.

THE *Sv. Ioann* was forced to anchor in the outer harbor of Nova Archangelsk, amid the island labyrinth where, two centuries before, the fierce Kolosh had slain half the crew of Chirikoff, the first white man to glimpse the northwest coast. It was too late in the evening for the brigantine to risk passage into the inner harbor.

The shadowy bay had an air of brooding mystery. Westward and oceanward towered Mt. Edgecumbe, a dead volcano filled with snow and ice. Eastward and shoreward, the rocky pinnacles of Verstovoi. The harbor was filled blood-red with the sun. Forestry, dense and gloomy wild at lower heights, dwindled to scraggy hemlock and fir as it climbed to an eerie, jagged timberline. The inner bay, two miles ahead, was dotted with small green islands, some of them scarce larger than Hagemeister's warship, the *Kutusof*, which was moored close to the wharves.

A cable length above the landing, on a cleared terrace, were half a thousand rough *barraboras* which housed the Aleut sea-otter hunters. Above them, high, rocky and secure, stood the massive stockade, with block houses on each corner and fifty guns commanding every approach from sea and forest.

Within were the barracks for *promyshleniki*, the magazine for fur bales and food, and the castle-sumptuous residence built by Baranof, who had "dictated weather to the Pacific" for thirty eventful years, when History swept forward with long strides and a continent was parceled out among the nations.*

When Larion Bef had stood firm against taking the ship in through the dark channel and had plunged anchor for the night, Yanovsky went below to his cabin and

*Baranof is directly responsible for the United States owning Alaska today. When he moved his headquarters from Unalaska to Sitka in 1800 he headed off the H. B. Co. and got a firm grip on the vast territory which the United States bought at two cents an acre.

wrote a brief report to Hagemeister. Dianof with four shipmates took the message down the harbor to the castle. In a short three hours he was back in the tiny cabin, reporting breathlessly.

"Hagemeister asks you to come ashore at once."

"But what did he have to say about the cargo?" Yanovsky asked curiously.

"Not a word. He merely bade you come ashore at once."

A quick flush of resentment at the command shot through the lieutenant. He had not wanted effusive praise; for that very reason he had chosen to report by messenger. But as his chief, Hagemeister might have displayed gratitude for the valorous service rendered him; as a man he might have shown respect for a perilous job undertaken and carried through at cost of precious lives. But the resentment passed quickly. Yanovsky's nature could not harbor it for long. Besides, Dianof's next words swept all personal thoughts aside.

"The Pravitelia tonight has no mind for anything but the trouble that is seething outside the castle, and inside too. We five who went in used our ears and eyes. Tonight or tomorrow this harbor may be red with other than sunset coloring."

"Tell me quickly what."

"The situation is all out of hand. Hagemeister is powerless and almost a prisoner in the castle. Baranof is powerless. Your commander offered to give him back the rule. The old bear tried, but could not check the danger. Neither nor both of them can stop things now. The Kolosh are massing. The Aleuts have not gone out with the fleets; they will help if it comes to a storming of the castle. The *promyshleniki* plan to seize a ship and escape. Hagemeister has only a handful of marines from the *Kutusof* to protect his power.

"In heaven's name, Stefan Yanovsky, hurry. You can stop it. They will listen to you. We spread word of your dealing with the pirates. Every faction acclaimed you—Kolosh and Aleut and Russian. They are shouting your name around the stockade, while Hagemeister trots his room and waits for you to undo his mischief."

Yanovsky paled. In his thoughts was the bloody rising of fifteen years previous.

"Take a *bidarra* and return," he ordered Dianof tersely. "Summon the leaders to meet me at the landing. Hagemeister will only temporize if I see him first. I will follow you at once."

The Cossack hurried away.

Yanovsky summoned Larion Bef to his cabin.

"Nova Archangelsk may topple to-night," he said simply. "The Kolosh may come out in war canoes to seize the ships in harbor. Be ready to up anchor and away for Astoria at the first threat. I am going ashore to do what I can do."

Dianof, the always reliable, had done his work well. At the landing Yanovsky was met with a greeting that must have surged up to the castle itself. The mob was a mixture of Kolosh warriors, Aleuts, Russians, convicts wearing their brands uncovered, and even a sprinkling of Sandwich Islanders, held hostage from King Kamehameha as protection for the Russian grain farms in those far south islands.

In a spacious cabin near the wharves, a dozen men awaited the lieutenant. They were subchiefs, spokesmen, leaders of the rebellious factions. He greeted each of them and plunged quickly into the trouble.

"I can promise you nothing. I am a subordinate, with scarce the rank of some of you."

He was interrupted by a chorused shout, the meaning of which he was too engrossed to realize.

"But I will be peacemaker and speak to the Pravitelia. You have cause to complain, but you want to answer injustice with bloodshed and mutiny, which are worse.

"I have plans which I think are just. I promise to put them before the Pravitelia within an hour. You must promise to hold your men from overt acts until my council has a chance.

"I think it is but just," Yanovsky spoke on, turning to each faction as he touched its troubles, "that the Kolosh nation should be given supplies for the winter, charged against their catch of furs; and that the Aleut hunting fleets should not strip the Kolosh islands and shores of fur. It is but just that the convicts who have proved their trust should be given some small wage and should have some measure of the freedom that is dear to man.

"It is but just that the Aleut hunting fleets should be supplied with food from the convoy ships while they hunt, instead of being given only water and that only when

out of sight of land. It is but just that they should have protection, and not be allowed to be slaughtered by hostile peoples. And it is but just that the *promyshleniki* captains with the fleets should be given a share of the catch instead of wages wherein the laggard and the worker, the skilled and the inexperienced, share alike.

"There are smaller troubles which I can not mention now. But all that lies in my power I shall do to secure you the just things I have spoken of. Will you agree to them? Will you give me time?"

Each man of the twelve rose and pledged himself to hold his faction and avert the disaster until the lieutenant should come to them again.

The gathering outside heard the proposals and howled acclaim as if the new and juster order of things already had gone into effect.

Yanovsky hurried through the stockade gate and into the castle. He was far from exultant. He knew now, after feeling the grim temper of the factions, that if Hagemeister held firm and refused the reforms they clamored for, the storm would break all the swifter for their dashed hopes.

Even with the reforms granted, the situation was almost hopeless. The large garrison had no food for winter; the vessel bringing grain from the Sandwich Islands had been wrecked off the Oregon coast. In continued fealty to Baranof, the old règime of commanders at the hundred posts of the company were flatly refusing to obey Hagemeister, the haughty naval officer who scorned them as mere *kupetzi*, traders. But if the storm center should be stilled, something might be done to salvage the situation.

IN THE castle hall Yanovsky met one who was waiting impatiently for him. They shook hands gravely, for the hall was crowded with servants and marines.

Small wonder that Pavlusha, the daughter of the old desposed tyrant, had been courted by every naval officer and trading captain who called at Nova Archangelsk. Her heritage from a Kolosh mother was a lithe and graceful body, raven hair and eyes, and a native dignity that stood in ample lieu of formal training. For her, tutors had been brought from Europe. There was no hint of the wilderness in her talk or about her clothes. Though only a slender girl of eighteen, she took active part in many a scheme, and was a power with her Kolosh kinsmen and with the old Baranof règime alike.

She led Yanovsky to the privacy of the castle library. Their greeting then would have lent some color of truth to the rumor that Yanovsky had thrice asked the commander's permission to marry the old manager's daughter, and thrice had been curtly refused for reasons unstated.

"Larion Bef tells me who it was that sent Tnegas with a message to me," Yanovsky said. "I should have known."

"It was perilous for you," Pavlusha explained, "but it had to be. For, see what your exploit, of which Dianof omitted no detail in telling me, has done for you! You have furs now to trade with the Boston ship when the captain comes back, as he promised me to do. Your word now has power. Before, you were only a lieutenant to the commander, a peace-maker for his troubles. It needed a brave deed to exalt you in the eyes of all the factions. You did what Hagemeister could not. My message and your courageous voyage have merely hastened the inevitable."

"The inevitable?"

Yanovsky looked at her, trying to read her meaning through her eyes.

"Hagemeister will tell you. He himself recognizes the inevitable now. I will send word to him that you are here."

She slipped away. A few moments later the door opened and Yanovsky stood face to face with his chief.

His first emotion was a rush of sympathy. In the three months since they had separated, Hagemeister had aged ten years under the threat of disaster and the burden of ruling a vast, raw territory. His iron will was broken. He had stood out for impossible things; had betrayed his ignorance of the people he was set over; had showed his inability to handle the complex problems of the vast system; had made a botch of his power. Instead of a willingness to learn, he had brought his proud naval code with him, and a scorn of the whole trading system. As a reward the system had broken him and cast him out.

Yanovsky started to report the meeting he had had with the leaders and to plead for acquiescence to his plans. But Hagemeister stopped him with a gesture.

"Do with them as you like," he said

bitterly. "I have only one request. Let Larion Bef be silent about his taking the northern passage at my command. If that report should get to the Admiralty College, my naval rank would be impaired. I am going back to St. Petersburg."

Yanovsky was dumb-struck. A hundred quick words leaped to his lips.

"But the managership?" he cried.

Hagemeister held up his hand for silence. Outside the stockade and inside, a tumult of shouting welled up. Yanovsky listened for the dreaded Kolosh war-cry, thinking that the blow had fallen. But above the noise he heard a Cossack voice booming:

"Yanovsky! *Noviy Pravitelia*! Stefan Yanovsky!"

A dozen voices took up the echo in unison.

The meaning of all the acclaim he had received, the meaning of Pavlusha's "inevitable" burst suddenly upon the lieutenant. They were calling him the new overlord of the company, at the moment when Hagemeister himself was turning over the power.

"I give it all into your hands," said Hagemeister. "And not with envy or malice, for I am glad to be on the sea again; but only with hopes that you will succeed. As son-in-law to Baranof and as kinsman to the whole Kolosh nation, and with the good will of all the other factions, you will settle the trouble."

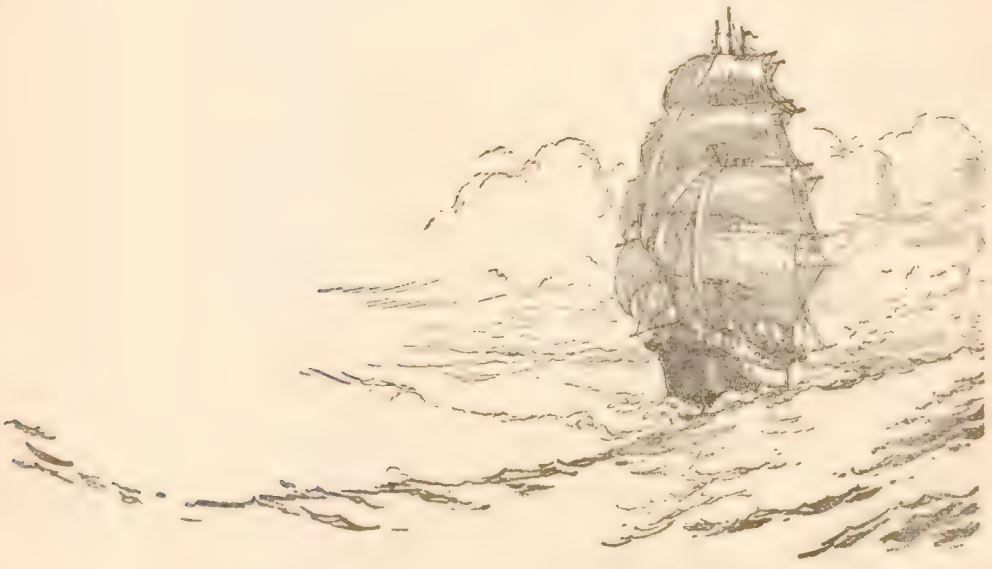
"But—" Yanovsky stammered, awed by the magnitude of his sudden power and responsibility—"I may have good will toward me, but——"

"That is all you need, Stefan Yanovsky; it is everything."

Hagemeister turned on his heel and left the room.

Standing there in dazed silence, Yanovsky again heard the Cossack booming his "*Noviy Pravitelia*," like a *poorgha* roaring. It was shouted by half a thousand throats.

The door opened and closed softly again. As Yanovsky turned, he was greeted with the same words, by a voice that made music of them.



BY HUGH PENDEXTER

THE BUSH LOPERS

A FIVE-PART STORY PART IV

Author of "The Homesteaders," "Iroquois! Iroquois!" etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"CARCAJOU"—the Wolverene—was fleeing from Quebec, where he had gone to confess his sins. He was a "bush loper," an illicit trader with the Indians and English; and in this year of 1687 the Government of New France was attempting to maintain a monopoly by inflicting stern punishment on all those who infringed it. Therefore he knew that Governor Denonville was like to continue the pursuit of him even to Mackinac, to La Baye des Puantes (Green Bay) or to the Narrows (Detroit).

In his flight he learned that one Captain Rooseboom, a representative of "Corlaer," as the Indians called any governor of New York, was heading an expedition to take the Indians' trade away from the French. So also was another New York trader named McGregorie. Immediately Carcajou's nimble mind began devising a scheme whereby he might act as messenger and thereby gain favor with Durantaye, or DuLhut, or Perrot, French commandants of the Upper Lakes posts, thereby possibly escaping punishment for his free trading.

At Cayuga Creek on the Little Niagara he captured a runaway Dutchman from New York Province anmed Dirk Brouwer, for whom Governor Dongan had issued a warrant on the charge of smuggling.

"You live, m'sieur," said the bush loper, "on two conditions: That you employ me as your *engagé*, and that you travel to Mackinac and La Baye."

At a portage they met the murderer Turcot, the fugitive dandy Chartier, fresh from France; Black Kettle, a Seneca friend of Carcajou; and Dead Bear, a Seneca whom Chartier had rescued from service as a galley slave, and who could not rejoin his Iroquois tribe because he had suffered the disgrace of being whipped.

The strange party paddled its way along the north shore of Lake Erie. At last they made the Narrows, ahead of all pursuit. There they were joined by Papa La Blanche, an old man who had so many wives among the various tribes that he could not remember them all. He was accompanied by Adario—the Rat—chief of the Tionantati. The party held a carouse, then went into a drunken slumber. In the middle of the night Carcajou felt a hand at his throat. He seized his assailant, and by the light of the fire which others renewed he stared in amazement at the stupid face and rolling eyes of Papa La Blanche. Limply clutched in the old man's hand was a long knife—his own.

BUT Carcajou did not suspect Papa of trying to kill him, for Papa had been helpless as a log from drink, whereas his assailant had been able to break away from his grip. That morning one of the Rat's men was found murdered with a new French ax. Carcajou denied that any of his party did it, but drew up an order on DuLhut at the Narrows to send presents in requital. Then the party left the Tionontati to resume their journey. On the way, much to Chartier's puzzlement, friction developed between Carcajou and Brouwer.

"Brouwer wants to say something, but is too wise. The Wolverene feels that Brouwer is thinking bad thoughts about him, and his heart is hot," observed Dead Bear.

At last they reached Point St. Ignace, where the French had a palisaded fort commanded by Captain Morel de la Durantaye. Walking toward the fort, Carcajou met three former acquaintances in the form of the giant half-breed Dubeau, "the Picard," and John Black—a name assumed—a renegade from the English colonies wanted for murder. While he and Dubeau were engaged in a friendly, but terrible, fight Brouwer went on and told the commandant about Rooseboom's and McGregorie's trading expeditions on the way from New York.

When Carcajou entered Durantaye's presence he found the commandant conferring with Chevalier de Tonty on the best way to arouse the Ottawas to go against the Iroquois according to Governor Denonville's orders, thereby stirring up trouble for the English. Hoping for immunity to punishment as a bush loper, Carcajou told the two captains that their Ottawas, together with the Hurons, were planning to ask for peace and friendship with the

"The Bush Lopers," copyright, 1925, by Hugh Pendexter.

Iroquois and English, and that if Rooseboom and McGregorie ever reached Fort Mackinac with the English presents the Indians were sure to rise and massacre all the French on the Upper Lakes and the Illinois.

"They must be captured before they get here," he added, "and be made to look like very small men in the Indians' eyes."

Just then a messenger from the Narrows entered bearing the note which Carcajou had sent to Du-Lhut asking him to send presents to the Rat, who, the note added, was about ready to jump to the English. The commandant flew into a rage and ordered Carcajou in irons. However, he escaped, and with old Papa la Blanche set about paddling like mad westward to find his friend Nicolas Perrot, former governor of the Upper Lake country, who he knew would understand everything and afford him protection.

At the Oconto River they encountered a party of twelve Fox tribe hunters. The whites were forced to kill one of them to make their escape, and two others, messengers sent from the home village, to prevent the hunting party from knowing that the Foxes had taken the warpath against the French.

Then he hurried on after Perrot, whom he found making camp on the Fox River. Perrot placated the Foxes and promised Carcajou a pardon from New France when they returned to Niagara. The Foxes, won over to the French side, promised to return with the party to Mackinac and Niagara as allies against the English.

After the departure of the Foxes a Potowatomi runner came up with a "medicine talk" (letter) for Perrot. Carcajou saw Perrot's face grow stern and gloomy as he read. Carcajou hid himself.

"This is serious," muttered Perrot. "That fellow Carcajou will get himself killed yet."

The bush loper whispered to La Blanche:

"Find out what is in that paper. I can hear ghosts laughing at me. Be quick."

WHEN Carcajou returned from his hiding place La Blanche reluctantly told him that Durantaye's message commanded that the bush loper be brought a prisoner to Mackinac. It had been discovered that the three dead Indians met their deaths from French axes and Carcajou was suspected. The Wolverene decided to go to Mackinac immediately to clear himself of the charge, and help prevent the Hurons and their allies from joining forces with the Iroquois.

Arriving at Point St. Ignace, Carcajou learned that Durantaye had already started for Detroit to fight the Iroquois. He was also told that the Hurons now favored the English and the Ottawas were neutral.

Suddenly an Ottawa canoe arrived with the news that the English had just been defeated. Shortly after this the French leaders landed with their English prisoners. Durantaye then confined Rooseboom and his men in the stockade, and secured the twenty confiscated canoes, loaded with supplies, near the shore.

From the Indians Carcajou learned that, in their eyes, he was innocent of the three murders with which he was charged. That night the Wolverene stole several of the captured canoes and hid the supplies in the brush, half a mile downstream.

Later, two dead Ottawas were brought into camp; they, too, had been killed by French axes. Had it not been for the intervention of the Rat the bush loper would again have been charged with murder; as it was Durantaye retained his suspicions.

Carcajou then departed for the Indian villages to sell the stolen supplies before the theft was discovered. When Perrot arrived the bush loper told him of the victory, and gave him a thousand beaver out of his profit from the goods he had sold, saying that it was Perrot's share as captain of the West.

Perrot urged the Indians under him to prepare for battle with the Iroquois, and told Carcajou that he would follow him to Detroit in twenty-four hours. When Carcajou reached Detroit he was delayed in his search for the French commander by a fight with Dubeau which that *coureur de bois* forced on him. After defeating his opponent the bush loper explained to Durantaye that he had traded some stolen goods, which he had found, to raise funds for the French.

Without waiting for Perrot, who was expected to arrive in a few days, the French "army" moved on to Niagara. On their way they met a messenger who informed them that twenty more English canoes had been captured. At this news they returned to the Post to receive the prisoners. Here Carcajou again stole two canoes laden with supplies.

When two *coureurs de bois* were found dead from poisoned rum the bush loper told the Hurons that the English were taking this means of killing them all; this rekindled their hatred of the enemy.

At last Perrot arrived. Again the French started for Niagara. Carcajou, being determined to discover the murderer of the Ottawas, kept awake during the night while the rest of the camp slumbered. Suddenly La Blanche heard a faint noise and pointed silently to the black forest on their right.

AFTER a minute, although they heard nothing, Carcajou sensed motion close on his right. It was merely an impression that something as noiseless as a shadow had passed. He gently rested his fingers on the ground before him and leaned forward.

There followed another half minute of tense waiting. Then came the dull *thud, thud*, of two blows delivered in quick succession. And with a spring Carcajou hurled himself from his hiding place and upon a vague shape that rose from the ground and blotted out one camp-fire.

He seized the intruder around the waist, pinning one arm to the naked body. The man was covered with oil and difficult to hold; and he commenced struggling violently the moment he was attacked. Although taken by surprize and having one arm imprisoned, he became a hurricane of energy and displayed strength such as the Wolverene never had seen even Dubeau exert.

La Blanche was but a few steps behind

his companion, and yet before he could take a hand in the struggle Carcajou was dismayed and disgusted to have his prisoner break loose and hurl him violently to the ground. He regained his feet only to be seized by La Blanche. Thrusting the old man aside, Carcajou ducked low to renew his attack, but the would-be assassin had vanished.

La Blanche gleefully cried:

"Here is an ax! Here is another! I dreamed of but one! It was a medicine dream. It saved my life!"

"To the camp! Alarm the camp!" roared Carcajou, racing to the dying fires. "Every one wake up and come on a man-hunt!" he shouted. "Catch Dead Bear, the Seneca! He killed a Tionontati man at the Narrows! He killed the Ottawas at St. Ignace! He tried to shoot me at Bald Point! He poisoned our soldiers at the Narrows! Kill him!"

The *coureurs de bois* were on their feet by the time he had shouted this much and without pausing to ask questions were scattering to obey the Wolverene's orders.

Soldiers began running up to demand the cause of the uproar. Carcajou brushed them aside to continue his quest. Tonty suddenly appeared, halted him and asked:

"What do you mean by such talk? What has happened?"

"The Seneca man tried to kill me and Old Papa. We had logs in our blankets, or we both would be dead. The Seneca had two axes. We're losing time!"

"If he is on the point your friends will find him. How do you know it was the Seneca man?"

"When I seized him my fingers felt the whip-marks on his back. He was covered with oil and got away." And, standing on no further ceremony, Carcajou raced to where the canoes were drawn up.

By this time the entire camp was in commotion and many wild questions were being shouted by the soldiers. Only the *coureurs de bois* and Indians asked no questions. Like fantoms they slipped into the sparse growth and searched along the shore. The Wolverene's outcries had told them enough.

The Picard ran to where Carcajou had halted on the shore. Tilting his head, Carcajou listened for a second, and above the uproar behind him heard the soft dip of a paddle. Snatching the Picard's gun, he fired out on the water. A mocking yell, followed by the wild war-whoop of the Iroguois, answered the random shot. All paused as the voice from the wide-open mouth slid down descending notes, stopped for an instant and then exploded in a blood-curdling yell.

The Indians halted their search inland and came trooping back to the fires. That same cry had brought terror to more than one village on the Upper Lakes. The Illinois yelled back a defiance, for they had whipped the Long House in one memorable fight. And the army knew Dead Bear the Seneca was afloat and paddling for the Niagara. A dozen *coureurs de bois* were quick to push off canoes and give chase. Carcajou would have led them had not Perrot seized his arm and commanded:

"Enough are after him. Too many to hunt in the dark for one man. If hard pressed he can land and make the portage afoot. You've done enough. You're to follow me."

He led the way to the officers' fire, now burning brightly with dry brush. Tonty ran up and announced:

"The Seneca is missing. The bush loper grappled with him and felt the marks on his back. Undoubtedly he is the slayer of the Ottawas at St. Ignace. Oh, there you are, bush loper!"

"But yes. Also he killed the Tionontati man at the Narrows, if m'sieur please," said Carcajou. "Before that he tried to shoot me at Bald Point. He gathered roots of the May apple while on the Narrows and steeped them after reaching St. Ignace. And why should we not believe he stole the trade goods we have thought the Ottawas stole?"

Before any one could speak he turned to Perrot and said:

"Will m'sieur now be kind enough to say the Wolverene is cunning and has kept his promise given to the tribes at Mackinac?"

"You have done well, Carcajou," admitted Perrot. "But you would have done better if you had guessed the truth when the Rat's man was killed in your camp on the Narrows. The Seneca must be mad. His life as a galley slave must have turned his mind."

"It would turn mine, m'sieur," assured Carcajou.

"Then see to it you do nothing to deserve his Majesty's displeasure," warned Durantaye. "Whether he stole the trade goods

is a question in my mind. But there's no doubt as to his being filled with unreasonable hatred toward the French. He's worked his best to set the Upper Lakes tribes against us. Now he is off to plan an ambush at the portage."

"Ah, that rascal!" exclaimed Carcajou, almost in a tone of admiration. "And he pretended he could not live in the Long House because he had been whipped!"

"He can't arrange an ambush unless the savages are already on the Niagara," spoke up Tonty. "But what has monsieur to say for bringing such an enemy among us?"

The young Frenchman was overwhelmed with shame and amazement.

"I can only say it would have been better had I left him to drown," he groaned. "But how could any human being imagine such black ingratitude, monsieur?"

"I don't see Monsieur Chartier is to blame," said Durantaye. "We knew the Seneca's history as well as he did. Other Iroquois have sided with France. None of us had reason to suspect him. But this big bush loper is lucky to be alive."

"And we are lucky he is alive," added Tonty. "I believe he is entitled to our thanks. If any more of our men were mysteriously killed most of the tribes would have deserted us."

"He is entitled to thanks for what good he has done," slowly conceded Durantaye. "There is another matter I had marked against him. I shall forget it if from now on he lives inside the law."

"If m'sieur's kindness could only stretch until it reaches the ear of Monseigneur the governor at Quebec!" sighed Carcajou. "For if I can't go back to the St. Lawrence, and can't go to Mackinac and trade, I might as well build a nest in a tree and try to live on worms like a bird."

"That will do, bush loper," said Durantaye. "Whatever is said in your favor at Quebec will depend upon how you conduct yourself in the Seneca country."

Carcajou confidently declared:

"Then all is well with me and I shall have a full pardon. M'sieur has been unfortunate not to have seen me at my best, when I was driving the Iroquois before like frightened squaws."

"The fellow's impossible. Get back to your camp," said Durantaye.

But when Carcajou jauntily walked away Tonty followed him to say:

"I shall keep an eye on you in the Seneca forest, my man. I'm curious to see how much of a boaster you are."

"I only ask that you watch me closely, Chevalier. Yet to do so will surely expose you to great danger as I shall lead you into close fighting."

"*Pardil* You'll never lose a fight for lack of a good opinion of yourself!" exclaimed Tonty.

Chartier was heart-broken over the Seneca's duplicity. He felt he was not welcome at the officers' fire, and in his wanderings came to the Ottawa camp, where he bemoaned to Father Enjalrane his guilt in bringing such a desperate man to the Strait of Mackinac. The priest comforted him by suggesting that the Seneca's experience as a galley slave had made him a madman without diminishing his red cunning. He reminded Chartier how the Seneca in refusing to drink brandy gave as his excuse that the *comite*, who had so often furrowed his back with a whip, always smelled of brandy.

"Substitute 'French' for 'comite,' my son, and the madman's obsession can be easily understood," added the priest. "If he had not been a pagan he would not have nourished such evil in his heart. You are not to be blamed. It will not be held against you after tonight. But better keep with the *coureurs de bois* until I can make our Ottawa children understand the truth. In the morning they will feel kindly toward you."

So Chartier took refuge for the remainder of the night in the woods runners' camp.

The morning found the Indians hot for revenge on the Seneca and all the people of the Long House; and so pleased were the officers over their martial spirit that Chartier was taken back on the old footing. Tonty was especially gracious to the young man, and told Durantaye:

"The Seneca has helped instead of hurting us. Our savages are going to the portage in a much better frame of mind than I ever dared hope for. A Huron man told me enough to satisfy me it was the Seneca who stirred them up to plan the massacre at the Narrows; and, before that, to side with the English and turn them against us when we captured Rooseboom. The man made one big mistake: When he poisoned the two soldiers."

"I believe he planned that some of our

savages would be the victims. He was very cunning," added Du Lhut.

AROUND the point of the western shore shot a canoe paddled by *coureurs de bois*. Almost abreast, as if racing to see whether white or red should be first to enter the swift current of the Niagara, was a larger canoe, painted and decorated and filled with Illinois warriors. Behind these pressed several canoes of Potawatomi and more of the *coureurs de bois*.

Carcajou, in the first canoe, glanced toward the bluff across the river and beheld a solitary figure.

"Dead Bear!" he shouted.

An arrow shot into the sky, carrying the defiance of the Long House, and as it finished its long, graceful flight by hissing into the current the Seneca vanished.

The coming to Niagara of La Barre's "Army of the South" in 1684 was now—June 27th—being surpassed as a spectacle; for here were French, English and Dutch, in addition to the fierce warriors of several far tribes. Nearly two hundred *coureurs de bois* and twice as many savages were hastening to the great rendezvous with Onontio.

Inside the Long House the tribes were burning tobacco to Hawenneyu and invoking the All Powerful's aid. His subordinate, Heno, the Thunderer, having his home under the Falls of Niagara, was also petitioned to confound the enemy when they made the portage. Although Ga-oh, spirit of the winds and having the face of an old man, had failed to destroy the hostile fleet from Mackinac, there remained a gantlet of other gods for the French and their red allies to run before they could rap on the Western Door.

More and more canoes glided into the river. Naked savages greased for war and with their heads and faces and bodies vividly decorated with paint, could not easily be distinguished from many of the *coureurs de bois*, naked and similarly painted. Some had their heads shaved except for the scalplock. Others, from more remote hunting grounds, glared from beneath a tangle of long hair. Head-dresses of feathers and buffalo horns and the skins of wildcats gave the wearers the appearance of so many grotesque forms of life borrowing the bodies of human beings, or of creatures part man and part animal. Necklaces of bear's claws and elk's teeth and human fingers were strung across many a brawny chest. The Picard wore one of bear's claws.

Nor did the flotilla approach the portage in silence. Their terrific shouting was hurled back from the bluff near which a wonderful city—Buffalo—was to stand. Bluffs and forest walls caused the mighty clamor to pulsate and reecho, and the general din was punctuated with staccato insistence by the discharge of guns.

The Potawatomi men commenced a war song, declaring themselves to be "the principal men." Other tribes claimed the same distinction; and it was in a frenzy of self-glorification that the fleet filled the river and advanced swiftly until the current slackened above Grand Island. Carcajou's canoe swung into the western channel, crossing between the Isle de la Marine and Grand, and nosed into the bank where the fourteen miles of portage path began above the falls.

Now the Senecas could have pressed the invaders hard had they been in ambush in force along Gill Creek; for confusion resulted for a time as the canoes choked the landing place while the first to land worked feverishly to remove canoes and stores. But these first ashore were slow to get away down the path over the "three mountains," and the disembarkment was further delayed.

The prisoners, too, were an encumbrance. Some had been made to work their passage down the lake, but it had not been deemed wise to loose all from their bonds. Rooseboom s Dutch stubbornness and MacGregorie's Scotch cunning, both masked by sullen silence, made Durantaye anxious to get the prisoners started at once for Montreal.

But seldom had the loyalty of the far tribes to the French been more pronounced than now. The capture of the two trading parties was accepted as an omen of England's weakness, while the Seneca's flight had destroyed any influence he had succeeded in building up. As the picturesque mob of white and red fighting men streamed down the path Durantaye knew that the prestige lost under La Barre was regained.

Carcajou, La Blanche, Dubeau and the Picard were the first of the white scouts thrown out. Only La Blanche's topknot distinguished him from a savage. The Indians, especially the young men ambitious

to win renown, were held back with some difficulty. Tonty crisply expressed it:

"They have one good fight in them down here. If a band of them is ambushed the rest will have bad dreams and go home."

As the four *coureurs de bois* worked north along the path others were thrown out to the east to cover the edge of the Seneca country. Reports sent in by these men satisfied Durantaye that the enemy were not on the portage. The task of restoring order to the jumble of an "army" proceeded rapidly, once the head was disentangled and Tonty had started the canoes and supplies to the mouth of the river.

Du Lhut followed the canoes with soldiers and set them to work throwing up a stout entrenchment on the point at the mouth of the river. This was on the east side of the camp, as the lake and river defended the position on the north and west. While these defensive arrangements were being made Durantaye started François de la Forest, often employed as a messenger, for Fort Frontenac to inform Governor Denonville that his Captains of the West and sixty prisoners had arrived at the Niagara.

As La Forest was paddling to gain and follow the north shore of Ontario the Ottawas and Hurons, led by Nansoaskouet, arrived afoot from Teiaiagon. Their coming was celebrated with singing and dancing and feasting, and when they were told of the second capture made by the French they forgot their inclination to make peace with their ancient foe and demanded to be led into the Seneca country at once. It required all of Perrot's adroitness to hold them in check and to prevent them from weakening the campaign by premature daring.

After La Forest had departed the camp was thrown into an uproar of enthusiasm by a bark from Fort Frontenac arriving at the mouth of the river. Besides the ammunition and supplies of provisions the bark brought good news. After talking with the captain Durantaye was able to announce that Governor Denonville was last reported at La Galette* and was leading an army of two thousand regulars, militia, and Indians. He was expected quickly to complete the rest of the stubborn river travel and make Fort Frontenac even as the bark was sailing for the Niagara. It was his intention to cross the east end of the lake and follow the south shore down to the Rivière des Sables (Irondequoit Bay).

From the bark it was also learned that awaiting Denonville at Frontenac were two barks loaded with provisions and ammunitions and two large bateaux for carrying

patereros—the small ordnance used for hurling stones and pieces of scrap-iron—some long guns, and some *arquebuses a croc.**

It was also very heartening to learn that the King's ship, *L'Arc-en-Ciel*, had arrived in Quebec, thirty-three days from France, an unprecedented voyage since the first white men came to Canada. This amazing voyage was universally considered through Lower Canada as being a good omen for Louis and New France. By this ship also came the gratifying intelligence that the King was sending eight hundred men to replace the farmers drawn from their homes. Durantaye declared that the French were in danger of being smothered in good luck. Of minor satisfaction was the intelligence that fifty Iroquois had been captured near Frontenac and were to be shipped to France. It was also explained why the Senecas had refrained from laying an ambush on the Niagara: They knew Denonville was to come by the south shore, and they were uncertain what villages he would attack.

Durantaye held a council and then directed the master of the bark to sail to find Denonville and say that the army at the portage would sail on the sixth (of July) and would arrive at the Bay of Sables, five English miles east of the mouth of the Seneca River,† on the tenth.

The *coureurs de bois* were as pleased as children over sweets by all these signs of early action. The red horde was almost beyond control, and the leaders knew they

*Now Prescott.

*Ancient firearms, resembling a musket, but longer and of larger caliber. It was supported on a rest by an iron hook fastened to the barrel.

† The Genesee.

could not keep them cooped up on the point. Preparations for the departure were hurried.

Carcajou, wearied of inaction, asked permission to scout far ahead of the army and was refused. Somewhat chagrined, he walked outside the entrenchments and sat down. Brouwer soon joined him. Carcajou politely inquired—

"Does m'sieur go along with the prisoners to Montreal, or does he go against the Senecas?"

Brouwer glanced at him sharply and replied:

"Why should I go down the St. Lawrence as a guard for prisoners? I go with the army. I know the country well and can be of service as a scout."

"But don't get caught," warned Carcajou. "The Senecas kept you warm while you were hiding from the English."

Brouwer shrugged his square shoulders and declared:

"The Iroquois will be whipped. You heard what an army Denonville is bringing? Why, he has enough men to capture Albany and New York. He could get along without these savages and woods runners from the West. Of course there is no place in the Province of New York for me. If I am to live with the French I must become a Frenchman and do my duty."

"That is well spoken, m'sieur!" cried Carcajou, catching the other's hand and pressing it warmly. "As to that very small hatchet between us it is now buried in the center of the earth and shall never be dug up."

"I hold no ill will," said Brouwer. "I spoke unwisely at Mackinac. But I was troubled. Of course now I know the Seneca man stole my small Huron belt. I hope he'll be where we are fighting. What I don't understand is why he didn't kill that boy, Chartier."

"*Mon Dieu!* How could he? Even if a savage he has some feelings. The boy saved his life. The best thing I can wish for M'sieur Chartier is, if he is captured, to fall into the Dead Bear's hands. I believe I know the savages better than you, m'sieur. Believe me, they are capable of stronger friendships than white men feel. If a friend is in trouble or peril, they never stop to count the cost. That does not matter. No debt is too great for them to pay when friendship demands it."

"Oh, I understand Indians pretty well," carelessly assured Brouwer. "I'm only hoping we shall start very soon."

"We break camp in the morning," Carcajou informed him.

No official announcement had been made to this effect, and Brouwer was skeptical. But on their return to the camp the word was soon given out, and with the exception of the prisoners the order was received with great joy. As the prisoners were embarking La Fontaine managed to whisper to Carcajou—

"I'm going to my death, Wolverene."

"What a talk! A few months in prison at the worst. Dream of elks."

"To my death," muttered La Fontaine, sweeping his gaze about the mouth of the river like one who looks for the last time on a familiar scene and can not look enough.

THE two hundred bateaux, as many canoes and the two barks bearing Denonville's army, with a hundred extra men doing convoy duty, left Fort Frontenac on July fourth and made Isle aux Gallots.* The fleet was detained there one day by a violent wind from the southeast.

On the day, July sixth, that the fleet sailed from the Niagara Denonville camped at the river called Cadranganhie.† At this place some of Denonville's Christian Indians followed the trail of fugitive Iroquois without success. On the seventh they camped near the River of the Onondagas, where they were watched by Iroquois scouts.

The eighth was stormy, with high winds, and only five French leagues were covered before going into camp.‡ Heavy rain and the difficulty and danger of approaching the shore again slowed down Denonville's fleet. But his Excellency rejoiced on this day as it brought back the bark from the Niagara, with Durantaye's assurance that his army would arrive at the river of Sables near the mouth of Seneca River on the date named. Anxious to be on time at the rendezvous, Denonville set out at daylight on the tenth, despite the strong wind and high waves. From the time Denonville crossed the eastern end of Ontario to La Famine he had been observed by Iroquois scouts, and it was the Iroquois' inability to foresee where the French would begin their invasion that had spared Durantaye an ambush at the Niagara.

*Henderson Township. †Sandy Creek. ‡Passage leading to the Cayuga.

On the day appointed and at the same hour the fleet from the east and the fleet from the west met at the point of land at the shoal entrance of the bay, which extends five or six miles inland. Its pleasing banks shelter what was a favorite fishing ground. Now was the time of great rejoicing. The coincidence was accepted as a good omen by all. Order was quickly brought out of the first confusion, and the canoes and bateaux passed the bar between the headlands to float in the deep, narrow channel. Denonville ordered the point to be fortified. This work was turned over to Captain Dorvilliers, commandant at Fort Frontenac, and under his capable direction the task of cutting and planting two thousand palisades, of tying faggots into fascines and shaping pickets, was rapidly completed.* Denonville selected four hundred and forty men to remain as a garrison in this camp. Being half way between Fort Frontenac and Niagara, only its lack of harbor facilities prevented it from being of prime strategic importance. La Salle visited it in 1669 and 1678.

The first matter to engage the governor's personal attention was the disposition of the prisoners. The Captains of the West sat in the council. Denonville used them largely as an audience as he already had made up his mind as to what he would do. He told the council:

"We will send the prisoners to Frontenac and later to Montreal and Quebec. Governor Dongan will be much humiliated. The Iroquois will have a poor opinion of the English. Dongan will write me more letters. We will start them for Frontenac at once. All except one man."

"Monseigneur refers to the man La Fontaine?" asked Durantaye.

"That deserter and traitor, Fontaine. Yes."

The officers waited, a question in the gaze of each. Denonville firmly continued:

"Fontaine must be shot. Had he only gone to live with the English it could be forgiven; for his Majesty's mercy is great. But he alone is responsible for the first intrusion of the English in our trading country. Twice he has led them to the Upper Lakes. He must serve as an example to others who are tempted by English gold."

A picturesque young Gascon, commonly known as Baron de la Hontan after his natal village of La Hontan in the Bassée-Pyrenees but christened Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, had the temerity to question the sentence. He was serving under Denonville and was but twenty-one years old. He said:

"I understand that this unfortunate man has done several services for his gracious Majesty and has traveled widely over the vast holdings of New France. I am told he asked the governor-general for leave to continue his travels, and, on being refused, went to New England to live. The two Crowns were at peace at that time. Because of his intimate knowledge of the Upper Lakes he was engaged to conduct two convoys; but he was only an *engagé*, and this Rooseboom was in command. I also understand he has a pass from Governor Dongan and that he has become a subject of England. His offense, it seems to me, is minimized by the fact the two Crowns are at peace now and were at peace when he went to live in the English colonies."

"He is a deserter and can not wash out that fact by carrying one of Dongan's passes," coldly said Denonville. "He was a deserter before he tried to hide under English citizenship. He will be shot, not because he went to live with the English but because he traitorously led the English into New France to corrupt our savages and steal our beaver trade. I have received orders from his most gracious Majesty to execute all such villains."

On that day, July eleventh, Fontaine was led out from the prisoners' camp and shot. Many of the *coureurs de bois* were much cast down by the tragic event. They were used to facing death in many forms and were ever ready to accept all the risks of their calling. But to be stood up, unarmed, and deliberately killed by men of their own race made them feel squeamish. Then again there were but few of them who had not at some time nicked, if not broken, the laws of New France.

Carcajou would not witness the execution and had withdrawn up the shore of the bay when the volley shattered the somber quiet of the point.* Brouwer came from the camp

*The defenses were finished on the morning of July twelfth.

*An undated Memoir on New France says Fontaine was killed with a tomahawk. De Baugy, Denonville's aide-de-camp, says in his journal that the man was shot. La Hontan in his book, 1703, says of the execution, "He was unjustly shot." Nanning Harmetsen, Fredrych Harmetsen and Dyrick van der Heyder, of Rooseboom's party, in a sworn statement to Mayor Nicholas Bayard, of New York, Sept. 7, 1687, state Fontaine was shot. Denonville does not mention this execution in his account of the Iroquois campaign.

and joined him, and the bush loper observed he walked unsteadily. Carcajou remarked—

"That was a sad business."

"It was damnable!" muttered Brouwer in English.

"See here! Be careful how you talk."

"Go and tell what I say. Let them shoot me!" thickly replied Brouwer.

"*Nom de Dieu!* One man, killed that way, is enough. But bite your tongue when you feel like talking where his Excellency can hear."

"Oh, I'm not looking for a bullet. I'm not French by blood. It's for you Frenchmen to talk."

"*Ma foi*, yes! But we are not looking for that kind of bullets, either. That young Baron La Hontan, they say, spoke bravely. But they'll be very slow to stand him up in front of muskets. A poor *coureur de bois*, falsely accused of breaking the law, mustn't speak loud when his Excellency has spoken," sighed Carcajou. "But I can't go back until they have buried the body."

There were officers also who deplored the execution, but none were so outspoken as La Hontan. Denonville, possibly to change the trend of thought, gave orders for the prisoners to be started under heavy guard to Fort Frontenac at once. They were glad to leave the point and were soon under way, bound for the St. Lawrence to labor in drawing bark and other material for strengthening the fort, and later to work for farmers around Montreal and Quebec.

DENONVILLE called another council before the prisoners were out of sight and announced that the invasion of the Seneca country would commence on the morrow. This elevated their spirits, especially those Captains of the West, who were used to action. The governor assured them:

"That fox, Dongan, will have to take to his hole. Here is something that you gentlemen from the West have not heard. On June twenty-second, while working above the rapids of the Petite Chesneaux, I was overtaken by a message from Dongan, the hardest he ever wrote."

He paused to smile reminiscently; then continued.

"Last November James of England signed a treaty of neutrality with our gracious sovereign. It was received by Dongan at New York on June eighth with orders to be printed and displayed and a copy sent to me. Perhaps you can imagine Dongan's disgust when I add that by the stipulations of the treaty the two Crowns are to maintain peace between their subjects in America, and that New France and the English provinces are to make war on 'wild' Indians without any interference from each other. Now who can tell me why Dongan is disgusted?"

Those, not knowing the conditions of the treaty and the blunder of the English king, shook their heads. Denonville explained:

"Because the stupid English king neglected to mention that the Iroquois are subjects of Great Britain. Therefore I am free to attack them as they are classed as 'wild' Indians; but Dongan is helpless and can not aid them unless he violates the treaty. So that was the hardest message for him to write of all the many he has sent to me at Quebec."

"That's good news!" exclaimed Durantaye. "I took it for granted we should hear English bullets humming in the dark Iroquois forests."

"You'll hear them," spoke up Perrot. "The savages will be well armed with English guns and lead."

"But they will not dare to send English soldiers to help the Five Nations," reminded Denonville. "The savages will never dare to give me a real battle without the English fighting at their side."

CARCAJOU, still loath to return to the camp, was delighted to have Perrot come along the shore of the bay to find him and say—

"Wolverene, you've been picked for a dangerous service."

"Your words are sweeter music than young Chartier's song of Anjou, m'sieur."

"You are to start at dusk and scout into the Seneca country until morning, then turn back, meet the army and report what you have discovered. You may pick two men to go with you, each reconnoitering apart from the others so as to cover much ground."

"I can not thank you enough, m'sieur, for bringing me this favor. I will pick my men and start directly after sunset," said Carcajou.

This was work to his liking. A gloomy forest and a brave enemy to be stalked would do much to erase the grim memory of that day. He hastened back to the

palisades and found Papa La Blanche talking with Brouwer. He buoyantly told his aged friend:

"I come to offer you a good chance to get killed. You shall go with me on a reconnaissance into the Seneca woods. I can take two men, and I love you so much, Old Nonsense, I ask you first."

"I'm your man, little one. You will need me to keep you at work. Without me you would forget your business and spend your time stealing copper kettles. Let us take a Potawatomi man for the third. They are eager to make names for themselves."

"For that very reason I will not take one of them. The Potawatomi would be so hungry to distinguish himself he would get us all killed. The Picard is a safe man."

"Dubeau is part Huron. He is a good man," said La Blanche.

"This work calls for a wildcat's cunning and not for the strength of a moose, my boy."

Brouwer now broke in, pleading:

"Take me. I am safe, and I am cunning in the woods, Carcajou. That shooting has turned my stomach. In God's mercy take me away with you and give me a chance to do a man's work. I know this country. I can lead you by many paths. The Senecas will have their scouts out to learn by what route the army is to march."

Carcajou had not given Brouwer a thought. He recalled how softly the runaway could walk through a forest. Having spent a winter with the Senecas and having often been a visitor to their country, he should know the land well. Carcajou did not doubt the man's bravery. He replied—

"If only everything had been friendly between us, m'sieur!"

"But it is now," eagerly insisted Brouwer. "What has our silly misunderstanding to do with serving France? I tell you, every bullet shot at that unfortunate man hit me right in the pit of the stomach. You will remember, I, too, am a deserter; only I had to run for it. If you don't take me I will go to monseigneur the governor and beg him to let me go alone."

Carcajou hesitated for a moment, then decided:

"Good, m'sieur. When it gets dark under the trees we will start. We are to reconnoiter all night and begin to return by sunrise. Have your weapons ready, and eat enough to last you till you get back.

"I can't eat. I shall take only a knife and an ax. We must scout and run away and avoid fighting, I understand."

"That is true, but I shall carry my gun so no thief of a woods runner can steal it." And he patted the rifle that once had belonged to Brouwer.

"You will find it a good gun. The greased patches of deerskin will permit you loading three times while a musket ball is being hammered home once."

"That is true, m'sieur. I have proven that. At sunset be ready."

From Oswego to the Niagara portage extended a rounded ridge, keeping from three to six miles inland. Along this ridge to Irondequoitt Bay ran one of the principal side trails of the Iroquois. Those following this path from Oswego left the ridge at the bay, turned south, rounded the head of the ancient Seneca landing place and struck off to the ford of the Genesee.*

The woods in front of the army were lofty and open and, so far as Carcajou had discovered without leaving the shore, were empty of Iroquois. Until dusk came he and his two companions for the night studied the silent forest. Both believed some of the foe were lurking there, within musket-shot of the camp; for they had spied on Denonville from the moment he crossed the lake.

At last the sun went down in a wallow of blood. This was an omen interpreted different by the Iroquois and Denonville's red horde. The Ottawas and Hurons danced and proclaimed their prowess. The Potawatomi, who had made no great name among the Lakes tribes, kept in the background and examined their medicine-bags, inwardly vowing to win prestige before leaving the Iroquois country.

The Illinois boasted of exterminating a large band of Iroquois twenty-four years back, and were confident of repeating that success. They had killed dogs at La Baye and had suspended them from the tops of trees to insure the good will of the Great Panther and to keep him from leaving his deep cave and causing tempests by switching his great tail. And behold! They had made the long traverse without harm.

The *coureurs de bois* were hungry for a farewell drinking bout, and Dubeau angered Carcajou by coming to him and saying:

"Can't our dear thief find us some

*Where the aqueduct crosses the river in Rochester.

brandy? The officers have some. Be good to us and steal a keg or two."

"*Cochon!* I will cut your throat if you insult me again," growled Carcajou.

Dubeau grinned, snapped his small eyes and murmured:

"Come back alive, little trap robber. We'll have a big fight."

The Christian Indians, Iroquois from Montreal, Hurons from Lorette, and Algonquins from the Temiscaming, were eager for the battles in the forest. Cryn, sachem of the French Mohawks, called the Great Mohawk by the English, made an eloquent speech, and reminded his men that while they would not fight against their pagan brothers who kept the Eastern Door, they must stick many axes in Seneca heads. Garonhiague led those Iroquois from the Sault of the St. Louis, and Tegretwan led those from the Mountain. Both these chiefs addressed their men.

Then the Christian Indians commenced singing and dancing and would not cease, except to eat, until it was time for the army to march. They had brought the meat of two lean cows and a number of dogs, and these furnished the feast. The French Iroquois did not mingle with the Western Indians. The latter were often designated by the Eastern nations as "wild men with tails hanging down."

Carcajou finished stuffing himself with meat, spoke to La Blanche, nodded to Brouwer and started up the east shore of the bay and was at once in the open forest. In silence he led the way for a quarter of a mile from the lake shore, then halted and bruskly directed:

"Now we will separate. Old Papa will keep close to the bay. I will move east and turn and travel due south. M'sieur, you will strike off to the southeast and inspect the ridge trail from Oswego. Of the three of us I shall penetrate the farthest south. M'sieur will travel as long, or a longer distance, but will be nearer the lake. Old Papa will not advance beyond the head of the bay. We will all remember we are not to fight but to listen, and run if discovered."

It was growing dark rapidly in the woods, and without further speech the three separated. Travel was easy for the bush loper even in the night as the woods were clean and open. When about a mile from the bay he shifted his course, made south and crossed the ridge without discovering any signs of the Senecas. There was no smell of smoke to warn of covered camp-fires. All the sounds he heard he could readily classify as belonging to nocturnal animal life.

He estimated that it was well past midnight when the tameness of his reconnaissance was disturbed by a thin, wailing cry, such as a tree-cat can make when seeking a mate. It sounded in the northeast and, he believed, close to the ridge. There was nothing in the cry to arouse suspicion, and yet Carcajou halted and faced about and wrinkled his nostrils. Some super-sense was endeavoring to warn him of danger.

After a minute he softly felt his way toward the place whence the cry emanated. The promise of action was welcome, and he only regretted that Brouwer was closer to the menace, if such it be. He considered Brouwer to be an excellent woodsman, but he held himself to be the best of all.

"If that was a two-legged cat M'sieur Runaway can take care of himself," he told himself; and yet he glided on as if hastening to rescue the man. "He knows this country better than I. If the savages are along the ridge all he need do is to stand still and let them pass him."

As he was threading his way through a noble stand of oaks the cry came again, this time in the south and behind him. He halted, as if undecided for a moment. His business was to locate the main force of the Iroquois. He believed the two wailing cries to be Seneca scouts signaling to each other. He might have turned back to the south to pursue his search for a large body of the enemy had not the wailing sounded again, this time directly north of him, or between him and the lake.

Now he was convinced Seneca men were on his right, behind and ahead of him. There had been no discovery cry or scalp-hallo, and he assumed Brouwer was outside the dangerous triangle.

The faint report of a gun from the direction of the bay aroused his keenest interest. Papa La Blanche had fired his musket. Knowing the old man's consummate woodscraft, Carcajou did not believe that the weapon was discharged in self-defense, but as a signal for his two companions to fall back.

Carcajou had supreme confidence in his ability to slip through any thin line of Seneca scouts and reach the lake at some

point near the army. He was loath to return without having made a discovery. He loitered, cautiously placing each step, and came to a halt as steps sounded behind, soft, furtive steps.

He heard something said in a murmured undertone. Two men were passing through the grove within ten feet of him and were practising only that amount of forest caution that is unconsciously expressed by a red or white woods runner.

They were come and gone, making for the north, and Carcajou heard but three words of their talk—

"—two hundred Cayugas——"

"The Cayugas are coming, or already are here in this country," Carcajou told himself. "Now I will start back and see why Old Foolish fired that gun."

He struck out on a long diagonal, northwest, so as to strike the shore of the bay where the Oswego trail left it in making the ford of the Genesee. He had pursued this course for not more than a quarter of a mile when he heard the bark of a fox and the wailing of a cat in the east. The Seneca scouts were gathering and exchanging signals.

Carcajou was not worried for his personal safety, but he was annoyed because he could not understand how the scouts had learned that French scouts were in the woods. Surely not the old man's gunshot down on the bay could be bringing the Senecas in from east and south and hurrying at least one along the ridge in the north. French sentinals along the shore might fire guns every time a squirrel was hunted by an owl. Yet he believed that Brouwer was safe, only he would have felt better had Brouwer taken a gun.

With all his bush faculties alert he held to his course. The signals were repeated and told him that more Seneca men had been drawn into that section of the forest.

"*Ma foi!* It does seem as if they were trying to catch the Wolverene," he told himself without losing any of his assurance.

He came to the ridge and skirted along its base until it gave way to a strip of marshland on the shore of the bay. He soon located the deep and narrow path that from ancient times the Senecas had followed in making their landing place at the mouth of the bay and was startled by the explosion of a gun ahead of him.

He treed himself, although he believed Papa La Blanche again was signaling him to return, or look out for danger. Had an Indian betrayed his presence with a shot he would have added his cry of defiance, or of the chase.

For five minutes he remained "frozen." Something rasped against the bole of an oak on his right as he stood facing the north. He noiselessly shifted his position and cautiously made ready to use his rifle. A low, guttural voice murmured something he could not catch.

Another voice answered, urging:

"The man has not returned. The one below fires his gun to call him back. He will come this way. We must wait."

"He is very cunning. The man who was whipped says he tried twice to poison his rum."

"I am more cunning. Be ready with your ax. We will wait."

Carcajou shifted his rifle to his left hand and drew his ax. Throwing back his arm, he screamed:

"Accursed traitor! I'll scalp you!"

And as the ax flew toward the voices he started down the path. A gun was fired after him, but he kept the narrow footing until near the mouth of the bay, when Old Papa La Blanche anxiously called his name. Carcajou exclaimed:

"We'll run for it, Old Simple. Brouwer was spying on us. He's with the Seneca scouts now! I've promised to scalp him!"

CHAPTER IX

THE BELT-BEARER

UNTIL Dongan's time New York colonists did not travel beyond the Seneca country. Until this energetic Irishman came as royal governor there had been a strange apathy on the part of the English as to the tremendous possibilities awaiting a commercial penetration of the far West. Father Hennepin's writings, "*Description de la Louisiane*," containing the history and description of the wonderful Niagara country and exposing the ambitious plans of France to seize upon the western empire, engaged the interest of no publisher in England and was not reprinted there. Other French works were translated for English consumption, but not "*Louisiane*." It was brought out in Bologna, Nuremberg and Amsterdam, but not in England, where its

revelations were of the most importance. Seemingly Charles II and his ministers were asleep while the great and wily Louis laid his plans to take over a continent, to push the Canadian border on the east as far west as the Hudson, and take over all the country from "the back" of Virginia to the Western Ocean.

Dongan no sooner entered upon his duties than he gave his attention to taking the beaver trade away from his northern neighbor.

While the Eastern Door of the Long House, guarded by the Mohawks, often swung open for intercourse with Canada, the warders of the Western Door had seldom been called upon to exercise their office. And so important was this sealing of the Western Door that the two high war chiefs of the red confederacy were selected from the Seneca nation.

Because of its isolation the Seneca country was largely unknown by both English and French. A few traders and woods runners from the Province visited some of the Seneca towns. A few missionaries from Canada lived at times in Seneca villages. On the morning of July twelfth Governor Denonville had less exact knowledge of the Seneca country than he possessed of the distant Upper Lakes.

CARCAJOU'S report of Brouwer's duplicity aroused great rage among the white men of the army; but many of the red allies put it down to his credit that he could so successfully deceive the French. The *coureurs de bois* vowed that they would dance the spy's scalp. Carcajou insisted that it was his personal prerogative to punish Brouwer. The officers promised generous presents to the Indian who brought in the man's head.

The morning of the twelfth was consumed in selecting a garrison to remain and protect the bateaux, canoes and supplies, and in making the final arrangements for the march on the enemy's villages. While the leaders were thus engaged a Seneca man sounded a loud call up the east shore of the bay, and Tonty and an interpreter advanced beyond the redoubt to inquire what talk he brought. The man kept behind a tree. Carcajou discovered three more Senecas similarly hiding and cautioned Tonty not to advance farther.

Several *coureurs de bois* and half a dozen Miamis and Illinois swarmed out to pursue the Senecas. Tonty ordered them back. After they had sullenly withdrawn the Seneca spy shouted—

"What are you doing?"

Through the interpreter Tonty replied:

"We are building a fort. This land belongs to Onontio. We come to make war on you."

"You talk like a foolish man. You will never come to our villages," replied the Seneca.

"Are your castles as far away as that?" asked Tonty.

"No. But we will be upon your army before you can reach them."

At this point one of the disgruntled French savages fired a gun at the Senecas and they all fled. With wild whoops a dozen Hurons and Illinois ran up the picturesque bank of the bay, but advanced only a short distance from fear of an ambush.

It was not until three o'clock in the afternoon that the army was ready to march. The day was very warm. Each soldier and savage carried provisions for thirteen days.

Perrot did not trust the Ottawas and Hurons and urged that they be sent ahead of the army, with the French Iroquois, more to be depended upon, bringing up the rear. Denonville approved of this suggestion and said it would be followed once the army was well into the forest.

The scouts quickly led the way to the path leading to Kanagaro.* Although the woods were so lofty and open as to permit the army to march in three columns, only three French leagues were covered that day. Those of the regulars who were being initiated into bush warfare found the forest insufferably close and warm after the delightfully cool breezes of the lake. The *coureurs de bois* stripped to the waist, greased their bodies to discourage the bites of the voracious mosquitoes and painted their faces. The militia, composed of *habitants*, endured the sultry heat philosophically.

No Indians were seen except a few furtive figures glimpsed by the Picard, La Blanche and Carcajou, who were scouting considerably in advance of the wide fringe

*On Broughton Hill, south of Victor, N. Y. For a long time the capital of the Seneca nation. In 1677, Greenhalgh states, it consisted of 150 houses, 50 to 60 feet long, with 13 to 14 fires in each. He saw four women and a boy burned there, proving the Iroquois, unlike the Hurons, did at times burn women captives.

of scouts that was flung out ahead and on both flanks of the army. These enemy spies slipped away without waiting to be fired upon.

That night Chartier, much irritated by the heat, came to Carcajou's fire and demanded—

"How much more of this barbarous country must we travel over?"

"He speaks with the voice of a chief," cried the Picard.

"Who knows? Not much perhaps, M'sieur de Niagara," politely replied Carcajou. "The towns are not far. M'sieur wishes for a chance to try his good blade?"

"I came to exterminate savages, not to be eaten alive by venomous insects," grumbled Chartier. "I wonder that any savages can live in this country." And he sank down disconsolate and laid his sheathed rapier across his knees. "Tomorrow, Wolverene, I believe I will walk ahead of the army with you."

"It is not allowed," quickly replied Carcajou. "I should like to know your good blade was beside me, but orders are very strict. If Carcajou is killed it is only another *coureur de bois* gone. But if m'sieur from old Anjou—! No! No! When there is fighting I shall be pleased to have m'sieur by my side. But not on a reconnaissance. You are not leaving? Stay and eat with us."

"I will eat where my company is welcomed," was the curt reply. And Chartier stumbled his way to where some officers were messing.

The night passed without any alarms. In the morning, while prayers were being made several Miamis discovered some Seneca scouts close by the big camp and would have fired upon them had not Denonville for some reason sternly forbid. This displeased the Miamis, who said they had come far to fight for Onontio. They were partly appeased by being promised a big fight within a day or two.

Immediately after prayers and while Denonville was ordering out the scouts Turcot and Dubeau came in from an all-night scout with important news. They had penetrated the first of two dangerous defiles through which ran the path to an old village, known as "the First Castle," and had discovered the trail of a large band of Senecas making for that town. Through both these narrow passages flowed small streams.

Denonville sensed the necessity of seizing these defiles before the enemy could lay ambushes in them. The *coureurs de bois*, appreciating the situation, left the working of scouting to their red allies and made up the path at top speed until they came to the first defile. Ascending the banks on both sides, they worked through this and found it to be empty of traps. A runner was sent back to the head of the army while the investigation was repeated at the second passage. This also was found to be safe.

The Ottawas and Hurons, now on the right and slightly in advance of regulars and militia, were the first to come up. As it was near midday they started to boil their kettles. Denonville hurried up with the advance and ordered the Indians to postpone their dinner and to advance till they came to a hill near and halt there while three of their number went to spy on the old village. These Indians were out but a short time before they came streaming back to the army to report that the Senecas were in the second passage.

Carcajou doubted the truthfulness of this. He took four Ottawa men and scouted to the second passage, and, as he had expected, found it open. He despatched a runner with this information and remained standing in the path until the advance of the army came up.

The Indians were now complaining because they had not been allowed to eat. Denonville had planned to make camp early, as this day was the worst they had experienced for heat, and the troops were almost exhausted. However, he ordered the advance to continue until he could reach more open country.

No opposition was met in the two defiles, but after passing through these the scouts came to a third. Some Miami men scouted this and fired on some Senecas. The troops were in a bad condition, but Denonville decided that if they were not able to travel they would be helpless if attacked in the open country. Although having only the advance of his forces he ordered M. de Callières to proceed with the three companies under Durantaye, Tonty and Du Lhut, accompanied by the Western Indians, and clear the way.

Still distrusting the Ottawas and Hurons, Perrot sent them on ahead. The rear of the army was guarded by the French Iroquois. Carcajou returned from scouting

on the right flank and reported two hundred or more Senecas stealing through the woods to cut the army in two.

At about the same time—three o'clock in the afternoon—the men under M. de Callières walked into an ambuscade in the third ravine. There were some four hundred Senecas in this force, although all were not in the ravine. Many of them were young men ambitious to prove their worth as warriors, and their premature fire allowed the three companies to fall back before they could be caught in the trap.

The Senecas broke cover, some two hundred of them, and with terrible cries ran to attack the right flank of the army. The other two hundred fell back to the village. Those charging fired their guns before coming to close quarters. Their lead was wasted; but the smoke arising formed a screen into which they plunged firing a second volley that did damage to the French Iroquois now coming up with the rest of the army.

Christian and pagan Iroquois fell on one another with axes and fought desperately for a short time. One French Indian was dragged from his companions and almost immediately staggered back to them with both arms cut off. He quickly bled to death. The *coureurs de bois* executed a flank attack, and the militia and regulars fired a tremendous volley that sent the enemy reeling back. Some of them, because they were wounded or being in great haste, threw away new English guns.

While this engagement was brief the firing was heavy and the fighting very fierce. Carcajou counted five Seneca women fighting like warriors beside their husbands. The enemy fell back precipitately, but for only a short distance. Papa La Blanche screamed:

"I dreamed of a dead Seneca and wet blood on my ax! Guess my dream for me! Why don't you come and fight? You said you wanted to fight!"

"We have four hundred men here. Send out four hundred of your men and we will show you how to fight," a Seneca promptly defied.

But the troops were now almost exhausted. Regardless of orders men were sprawling on the forest floor, panting for breath and coughing from the heavy smoke. The heat, and not the fatigue of march or fighting, had sapped their strength.

Denonville gave orders to go into camp. There was no attempt made to pursue the enemy, as the country ahead was covered with thickets and briers, while directly in advance was a heavily covered brook. More than twenty dead Senecas were found in the bush, and the trails of blood told of many severely wounded.

Word was passed that Father Enjalrane had been seriously wounded by a bullet. The French Indians began lamenting the death of their leaders, Garonhiague and Tegretwan. Cryn, the Great Mohawk, had escaped without a scratch. Denonville's captains told him the fighting must be pushed or their Indians would desert.

"Just as soon as one of our savages takes a scalp he wants to go back home and dance it," said Tonty, whose right hand was bloody from blows delivered at close quarters.

Chartier, wild of eye, naked rapier held before him, came upon Du Lhut and cried:

"Where are they? The savages? I have not seen one."

"Monsieur," truthfully soothed Du Lhut, "very few of our soldiers have seen a Seneca this day. Only those on the flank and fighting among our Christian Indians can say they saw an enemy."

Chartier prowled about on the flanks of the army, but soon returned. Scenes familiar to those who were not novices in bush-fighting, and where Indians were used as allies by both sides, sickened him. He walked with a stagger, like one drunk; and despite the close heat his face was pale.

He happened upon the Picard, La Blanche, Carcajou, Dubeau and Turcot, who were waiting impatiently for a kettle to boil, and although he sank down beside them the sight of the kettle caused him to grimace in deadly nausea. The *coureurs de bois*, naked to the waist and steaming from the heat and their exertions, anxiously asked if he were wounded.

"Wounded? *Bon Dieu!* No!" he moaned. "I haven't seen one live enemy today. I'm sick. That accursed kettle!"

"Eh? What do you mean?" growled the Picard. "If we're not fine enough company for you, Anjou——"

"Don't! It's the horrible sights!" gasped Chartier, leaning limply against a tree. "I've seen some of the dead Senecas! What do you think! Those Ottawas are devils! They are drinking the blood of the dead! Think of it! They make haste to do so

while it's warm! If his gracious Majesty knew this he would order them all to be executed. Why, *messieurs!* With my own eyes I saw them cutting up the dead Senecas and putting them in kettles to cook and eat!"

"*Mais oui,*" calmly agreed Carcajou. "That is one of their tricks. Different people have different customs. But at that, they eat only brave men. The flesh of a brave man will make them brave, they believe. I don't know; I never tried it."

"*Monsieur!*"

"Hold up your head, young sensitive. If Onontio will use savages to whip savages you must expect to see savage sights. Some of the Iroquois will tell you that a man will eat anything, being superior to an animal. And some of our red allies, if known to have fought bravely, will be eaten by the enemy tonight. You will see some queer *potage*, M'sieur Sensitive, if you watch the making over of a new world. I've seen an executed man hung up in an iron age at Quebec until his bones fell apart. But who knows how many we lost?"

"I saw six Canadians, one soldier and five of our Indians dead. A number of soldiers and Indians are wounded," mumbled Turcot as he speared his knife into the kettle and fished out a piece of meat, although it was scarcely warmed through. Chartier turned his head.

Dubeau slowly added:

"There are wounded in the Ottawa and Huron camps, also among the Christian Indians. It's well the army came up and fired all their guns and blew the Senecas out of the woods, or in another minute they would have been through our Iroquois."

"It's better that the Senecas attacking on our right are young men and over anxious," croaked La Blanche. "They struck us close to where his Excellency was standing. If they'd been older men we might now be without a leader. If we fail in this campaign we'll never win back the name we lose."

"Shut up, Old Simple!" roared Carcajou. "That is no talk to make. 'If! If!' You make me sick. Every man here takes a soldier's chance——"

"No, no!" mumbled Chartier, holding his head in his hands. "Nor the chance of a dog. It's too horrible."

"And his Excellency still lives," continued Carcajou without heeding the interruption. "But I'd give ten packs of beaver to run across Dead Bear, the poisoner. And I'd give two years of trade to meet Brouwer alone."

"Be patient, little one," encouraged La Blanche. "You'll meet them yet. But ask the saints to send you; don't meet them together when you are alone. You'll need Old Papa before this business is finished."

"Evil bird!" growled Carcajou!

"Some of the soldiers are sick," remarked Chartier in a weak voice.

"They always are," jeered Carcajou. "The Wolverene is a sad rascal and should be dead in an iron cage, or bending over a heavy oar in his Majesty's galley, till bush-fighting pops up. Then he's a good fellow so long as the fighting lasts. Think of sending men into the bush who don't know how to take care of themselves on a fine, sunshiny day! See here, Turcot; if you touch any more meat before we've divided it I'll cut your throat. Watch him, Papa, while I walk around. I'm so hungry I can't bear to smell it cooking."

"Don't!" faintly pleaded Chartier, getting on his feet. For although fearing to witness more bestial scenes he could not bide by the kettle any longer. "I'll go with you. It's a horrible country."

"Why horrible?" impatiently demanded Carcajou. "Trees, water, sky. The country is all right when royal masters cease loving each other as you've seen today. Haven't wet your long sword yet?"

"I've told you I have seen nothing but smoke. It is still in my lungs. I heard the howling of many demons. How can I use my rapier on smoke and howls?"

"You must kill them where you catch them," advised Carcajou. "Ah, what have we here? A dead Seneca they haven't cut up yet."

Several Frenchmen and Cryn, chief of the Canadian Mohawks, were standing around the man on the ground. Cryn began asking him questions, and Carcajou realized that the man was not dead, but mortally wounded. The Great Mohawk pressed his queries and promised—

"You will not go in to the kettle if you talk."

Then the Seneca laboriously answered:

"There are eight hundred fighting men at the First Castle. Two hundred Cayugas are coming to help them, also many Onondaga. Onontio and his men will never leave

these woods alive. All will be swallowed up. There will be much mourning among the white and red squaws on the St. Lawrence."

With a final effort he raised himself on one elbow and attempted to sing his death song but died before he could even proclaim his name.

Several Ottawas rushed up to drag away the body but were stood off by Cryn, who warned them:

"This is not your man. He has bought his body from the kettle."

"*Ma foil* If he told the truth we'll have some work ahead," remarked Carcajou.

"Frightened, bush loper?" sneered one of the Frenchmen.

"I will hook arms with you and take a walk, m'sieur of the stout heart," pleasantly offered Carcajou.

"No duels are permitted," stiffly replied the Frenchman.

"Oh, I was not thinking of that. You would not make a handful. You will walk until you grow frightened and beg to be released so you can run back to the army. Or, if you are such a brave man, the walk will take us into the old Seneca village."

"I am on the King's business. I can not throw my life away."

"Good. The Wolverene also serves his gracious Majesty. He is as tame as a housecat until some one rubs the fur the wrong way. Then there are sparks. As to the little walk: When the King has been served and m'sieur wishes to prove his courage I will be ready. After that our friends will sit down with their pipes and talk about the one who was frightened."

The man had nothing more to say, and Carcajou walked on to the next fire.

HERE another bit of tragedy was being enacted. Some Huron scouts had found an aged Seneca man hiding in the woods and had brought him in to be burned. When Carcajou and Chartier came up the Reverend Jacques Bruyas was examining him. He turned to the spectators and announced:

"I find traces of Christian religion in this old man. He should be baptized."

The Hurons insisted the man be turned over to them as the dry bark was ready and a small tree trimmed for the victim. Some of the French Iroquois supported Father Bruyas, and the Hurons sullenly ceased their insistence, yet hovered around the prisoner, hungry to pounce upon him and drag him to a fire once the ceremony was finished. Their leader demanded that the Black Robe baptize the prisoner at once.

Father Bruyas called on the French Indians to assist him and proceeded with the baptism on the edge of the hidden brook. The Hurons kept back from the brook as it was the deadline between the army and the enemy. The priest was not interrupted in his work, nor were the Christian Indians who stood by him.

On conducting the old man back to his captors Father Bruyas insisted that the man should not be burned liked a pagan. The French Indians supported him, and at last a compromise was reached whereby the prisoner was turned over to the Hurons and was promptly knocked in the head with an ax.

Chartier was astounded at this unexpected ending. He had followed Father Bruyas' talk and had taken it for granted the old man would not be harmed. When the *casse tête* smashed down on the bowed head he felt the blow in his heart and went very weak and clung to Carcajou's arm for support.

"*Mon Dieu!* Such a people! Such a country!" he whispered.

"But he was a very old man. He could not keep up and hid himself in the bush. And instead of being burned very slowly he died quickly and without any pain," explained Carcajou. "Upon my faith, young M'sieur de Niagara, you are hard to please!"

Other scouts came in with several women. One of these said that for four days old men, women and children had been fleeing to the Cayugas behind the lakes. They repeated the statement of the dying Seneca that two hundred Cayugas would soon be supporting the Senecas. They knew the Onondagas had been asked to send men, but did not know if they would as the Black Robes living in their villages at different times exerted a great influence over them. They also said that the Senecas had been furnished with much powder and lead by Corlaer and with quite a few guns. For the interrupted invasion of the Miami country, they added, a barrel of gunpowder had been sent to the Western Door from Albany. These women were not harmed but were given food and water.

At another fire Carcajou and his companion found some Illinois men rejoicing over

the arrival of an Illinois woman, who had been a slave of the Senecas for nine years. She told her countrymen that the coming of the army and the flight of the Senecas from their four villages along the path from the bay had permitted many slaves to escape. Heretofore a slave had not dared to attempt flight as he was sure to be run down in the illimitable forests by his masters. Recapture of a fugitive slave meant a lingering, horrible death for the victim. This statement about slaves escaping was substantiated during the entire campaign. Men and women continued arriving to leave the country under the protection of the army.

The woman loudly rejoiced—

"Now I will go back to the Illinois country."

A gun discharged from the hidden brook and she fell, shot through the thigh but not mortally wounded.

Instantly the Illinois men and some Miamis were swarming to the brook, but they found no Senecas hiding there. The incident taught the officers the need of keeping scouts well out during the night as the enemy were very bold and very cunning in approaching a fire. A loose ring of veteran woodsmen was thrown around the entire army.

It began to rain in the night, and the morning—July 14—was drearily depressing under the heavy downpour. It rained until midday with the army doing nothing beyond trying to improvise shelters. When the storm showed signs of lessening at the noon hour Denonville ordered an advance in battle array. To reach the old village, a league away, the army must cross an open plain.

Three-fourths of a league from the old village, or First Castle, was the "New Village," or Second Castle. It was at the latter place that the enemy were believed to be assembled in force. It continued raining while the army was crossing the open country. Scouts returned from the old village and reported that the Senecas had burned it before retreating. Denonville went into camp outside the ruined town. Much new and old corn and several droves of hogs were brought in, and despite the storm white and red fighters set about preparing a feast.

Chartier had developed a great liking for Carcajou's company, and as soon as the army went into camp he hastened to find the bush loper. This time, weak from hunger, he did not refuse food after entering the camp of the *coureurs de bois*. He awkwardly attempted to help the men put up tiny shelters against the rain.

While the veterans were building the brush huts and roofing them with blankets the French Iroquois under Cryn waited on Denonville and asked permission to start at once for the new village and surround it. Denonville did not dare to permit any of his red allies to wander from the army for fear they might take a notion to return home.

He refused the request, saying:

"Men already have been sent to the new village. White men. Onontio needs his red children near him, to keep snakes from crawling too close to our fires."

This refusal displeased the Canadian Indians, and they were in a sullen frame of mind as they returned to their kettles of boiled corn and pork. Carcajou did not believe any men had been sent to the new village, and he was much surprized when four hundred men, supposed to form the rear of the army, returned from the village and reported it to be empty. This report also surprized the commander, who had been confident the enemy would give him a hard fight on the morrow. Nor was the news pleasing. It was difficult to conquer a people that kept in hiding.

In 1665 M. Courcelles invaded the Mohawk country and failed to find the enemy. Hardships were the enemies which prevented him from accomplishing anything. A year later M. de Tracey with twelve hundred French and six hundred savages came through the Eastern Door and burned the principal village of the Mohawks, but met no Indians in battle. La Barre's expedition ended at Hungry Bay. With this history in mind Denonville was determined to find and crush the Indians. Now, he feared, they were playing hide and seek with him.

Perrot had been so busy keeping his Indians in hand that the *coureurs de bois* saw but little of him except on the march. Now he came to their camp after the rain ceased and asked for Carcajou. He was conducted to the Wolverene's fire, seated himself between Carcajou and La Blanche and abruptly asked:

"What do you think of our Indians, Carcajou?"

Carcajou dished out a large helping of pork on a wooden platter and filled a wooden bowl, brought from the burned village, with boiled corn, placed the food before his guest and then replied—

"We must finish this business in a very few days, or get along without them."

"If we can find the Senecas in any numbers we can easily teach them a lesson their children's children will never forget," said Perrot.

"*Mais oui.* If we can find them. But with all North America to hide in how will we find them? If they stay hidden in their forests much longer hunger will whip us. Our wounded and sick will soon make us withdraw to the lake. Our Indians may leave us any night."

"That is what's troubling me," moodily said Perrot. "My Ottawas and Hurons are talking things they don't want me to hear. That's a bad sign. The Ottawas, except for a brief time when they had to fight on the right of the army or be killed, have not done much. I want you to go to their camp and see if you can find out what they are planning. They're up to some mischief."

"There is but one thing they can be planning, m'sieur. I do not need to visit them to tell you that. They plan to return to their villages on Point St. Ignace. They have taken some scalps. Ever since it commenced raining I have expected to hear they had deserted us."

"That may be partly true, but there is more to it. The Hurons are in it. They know the talk I would give them. But they may say something to you."

"I am completely at your orders, m'sieur. But Old Papa Foolish here or Dubeau the half-Huron would be a better man."

"Then you go, La Blanche. I'll stay here a bit. They'll talk more freely if I am not in their camp."

The old man was absent an hour, and when he returned he could only report his suspicions. Contrary to his expectations the Ottawas would neither talk with him nor confer in his presence. A Huron man did tell him the Western Indians were sad because Onontio's Black Robe would not permit them to burn the old Seneca man after he had been baptized.

"Well, I'll get after them tomorrow. Keep your ears open, Carcajou."

The night passed quietly and the morning was fair. Denonville ordered the French Iroquois and the Upper Lakes Indians to cut down the new corn and burn the old. The Indians to a man refused, saying it was wrong to destroy food. The converted Iroquois could not forget their pagan beliefs. The corn plant sprang from the bosom of the mother of the Great Spirit. Together with squash and beans it was still called by them "Our Life" and "Our Supporters."

In ancient times the Iroquois had lived largely from the fruits of the soil and would be ever closely and affectionately linked to the land. Although baptized by the Black Robes they could not forget the green-corn festivals, when they had burned tobacco to Ha-wen-ne-yu, the Supreme Spirit, and thanked him for "Our Supporters."

They were perfectly willing to kill the Senecas, although refusing to fight against the other nations. But to destroy the great fields of corn was a sacrilege. It was not the plant but the Spirit of the Corn they would be affronting. And there was the spirit of the bean, and of the squash. The three were affectionately called "the Three Sisters." No conversion to a white man's faith could wash from their minds the belief that the Spirit of the Corn was wailing for the loss to the red man when the rustling leaves were wantonly stripped and the stalks destroyed. The Ottawas had a similar myth and a similar form of thanksgiving.

So the soldiers were turned out to do the work. After all the fields in the vicinity of the army had been laid waste and all the old corn heaped in piles and fired, the army advanced in battle formation to the new village. This place was found deserted as previously reported. An attempt had been made to fire it, but only a few huts had burned. The fort, measuring eight hundred paces in circumference, was standing and was well flanked by a long entrenchment that extended to a spring on a hill. As this spring was the only water in that immediate neighborhood Denonville believed the Senecas had evacuated the village for fear the supply would be cut off and they would be left in a trap.

Through the army and *coureurs de bois* ran the confident words—

"We'll find them at the next village."

But there were many who did not believe what they said.

Already heat and rain and too much pork and green corn were turning the

soldiers' minds toward the cool winds of Ontario and the comforts to be found on the St. Lawrence. Each day increased the difficulty of conveying the sick and wounded. It was said among the French that some of their own dead had been left unburied* after the fight near the old village, and that the Senecas found these. In short, time was fighting for the Senecas; and had they received reenforcements from the other nations in the confederacy Denonville would have been lucky to lead a squad of men out of the wilderness. At the outset of the campaign his Canadian Indians had stated that they would not fight except against the Senecas.

Tonty told Durantaye, as the two watched the smoke rising from the burning piles of old corn:

"I have used my right fist on only one head. If these savages are so inconsiderate as to keep hiding from us what can we do, monsieur?"

"Get back to the Seneca landing place as soon as possible," replied Durantaye. "They burn their own villages and hide. We burn their corn and kill their hogs. The other nations will supply them with corn and hogs, and they will build new castles. Sieur Dongan will also send them much help. We have done well so far, but ——" He did not finish.

"I understand, monsieur," gravely said Tonty. "We've made a start. That's more than M. La Barre did. But the Seneca nation is as strong as ever. *Sapristi!* To bring an army of more than two thousand here and kill less than two score of the savages! Well, we must wish for better things."

All that day the army remained in camp outside the village while the soldiers destroyed corn, beans and other vegetables. Denonville himself said it would take months of unhindered work to destroy all the crops in the Seneca country, as his scouts were continually coming in and reporting large fields hidden in the forests.

DURING this day John Black, the renegade Englishman, who had been marked missing, and who was believed to be dead, came into camp and entertained the *coureurs de bois* by a recital of his adventures. He was scouting in the rear of the army on the day of the fight and had been cut off by enemy scouts. He had managed to elude his pursuers and remain in hiding until the enemy had fallen back. He had thrown away his gun when fleeing and had eaten nothing but roots and a handful of half-ripe berries found in a tiny opening.

He was warmly congratulated on his escape and given a new gun, one taken from a dead Seneca. But after the noonday meal Carcajou took La Blanche aside and said:

"For a starving man he ate but little, eh? Come now, Old Simple, what do you say?"

"He found something to eat. He makes himself suffer in his story so he will get credit for great hardships."

"Your mind is spoiled like last year's acorns," growled Carcajou. "If he gets 'lost' again he should be followed and watched."

"It's your mind that's bad. It's like this year's acorn with a worm in it," muttered the old man.

"Well, don't you repeat what I've said," warned the bush loper. "Here he comes; and I don't see he's thinned out or scratched by briers."

Black came from the direction of the Ottawa camp and limped as he walked up to a fire. While he was pulling off his moccasins and asking for some tallow to rub on his feet Carcajou hastened to the Ottawas, found Nansoaskouet and bluntly said:

"Your men have rolled their robes and blankets. When do you start for Macinac?"

Nansoaskouet, taken back by the unexpected question, was silent for a moment and then sullenly replied:

"How can we carry Onontio's big club against the Senecas if the Mohawks and other Iroquois from Canada say they are sick of fighting?"

"They are not sick of fighting. You have listened to evil birds," replied Carcajou.

Nansoaskouet remained silent; and, satisfied that he could get no more talk, Carcajou lounged from the camp. When out of sight of the Ottawas he ran swiftly to where the officers had their fires, and he slowed to a walk only when he beheld Perrot talking with Denonville. Taking a position where he could catch Perrot's eye, he signaled him to approach. Perrot, understanding that the bush loper must have

*Two Christian Mohawks of Denonville's red forces, when examined at New York, said the French dead were left unburied.

something important to communicate, excused himself, joined Carcajou and asked—

"Well?"

"Bad. You must work sharp, m'sieur. Your Ottawas and Hurons say the Christian Indians are tired of fighting and that all from the Upper Lakes and from the Sault and Mountain of the St. Lawrence are about to go home."

"The miserable wretches!" exclaimed Perrot.

He thanked Carcajou hurriedly, hastened to the Ottawa camp and announced that he had a big talk for the Ottawas and Hurons. The leaders came forward slowly as if reluctant to receive the talk. Their men filled in the background and listened eagerly. Without any preface Perrot began:

"At Mackinac you told me you always looked on me as your father. You said you would never be tired in following me. I want to tell you this: You must not call me father again. My face would be hot with shame if the brave Potawatomis, the bold Miamis and the warlike Illinois, who follow me, should know that the Hurons and the Ottawas after this day call me 'father.'

"I am surprized you came this far with me. I do not understand why you did not run to the lake when the first gun was fired. You know nothing about war. You are cowards. You can only catch foolish fish in a net. You never have killed real men. You never ate a man unless you found him dead."

With wild howls of rage the savages pressed closely around him, glaring murderously. Many others ran up, drawn to the scene by the loud denunciation. Men with filthy hair hanging over their eyes half-drew their knives. The Indians from the vicinity of missions stretched back their lips like wildcats snarling. Perrot stared steadily into their baleful eyes and unflinchingly continued:

"Howl! That's the only way you know how to fight. When I hear *huarts* (loons) howling at night and trying to make me believe they are wolves I think of the Ottawas and Hurons. You've eaten so much hog meat your hearts have turned into hog hearts. They say you ran and hid in trees when some Seneca squaws were brought into camp.

"The French Iroquois are laughing at you. They say they pretended to stop fighting to see if you had blood or water in you. You are bad flesh. You can't fight and you can't hunt. You are fish eaters.

"Your women will be glad to be captured by the Senecas; for they are men. Illinois and Miami women, captured by the Senecas, have escaped and come to Onontio so they can go back to their people. Where are the Ottawa and Huron women held as slaves by the Iroquois? They go with their masters, for they have no men to return to."

He paused, and Nansoaskouet hoarsely screamed:

"You shall see if we are men! You shall see if we can fight! If you do not keep up with us in the fighting we will cut off your head and put it on a tall stick!"

Perrot laughed silently and taunted:

"If I keep up with you when we have a fight I shall be one of the first to reach the great lake; for you will turn and run when you hear the first war cry. You are women. Go home and bring water and wood and let your squaws do the fighting and hunting. The French Iroquois are laughing at you. They are waiting to see you run to the lake."

He wheeled about and bruskly elbowed warriors out of his path. Several chiefs ran after him, panting as if exhausted. Nansoaskouet huskily cried:

"Stop! We still call you 'father.' Lead us into a fight. We will all run ahead of you. You will find us by the dead men we leave on the ground."

"I can not lead chiefs who can not lead their warriors. The French Iroquois ask me to lead them."

"Our warriors will follow their leaders. We will follow you. We will dance many scalps before the French Iroquois dance even one little scalp. You have said we are not men. We will show you we are very brave men. After the next fight you will think of the French Iroquois and not of the Ottawas and Hurons, when you hear the *haurts* howling."

"That is a very strong talk," replied Perrot with a laugh. "I will believe it when I see you in a fight."

And, shaking off their detaining hands, he hurried away, leaving a chorus of howling and lamenting behind him.

He made straight for Denonville and simply announced:

"They will fight, monsieur the governor.

As they feel now they will follow me through the gates of ——. They had agreed with your Indians to stop fighting. But they will fight. I talked a bit with them. They will follow me anywhere. But we must find the Senecas very soon. As they are now I can capture any castle in the Senecas' country."

"Yes; we must find a fight before they cool off," agreed Denonville moodily. "I am surprized my Indians should agree to stop fighting. They are brave enough."

"So are the Ottawas when they are stirred up. When I brought them to help Monsieur La Barre they almost broke away from me to go alone into the Long House. But some one has been making a strong talk to them. They won't tell me, but there's Old La Blanche. If he can talk with them before they cool off they may say things. I must speak with him at once, if monsieur will excuse."

Without waiting to be dismissed he darted away, caught La Blanche by the arm and hurriedly commanded:

"Go at once to the Ottawa camp and see what you can learn. Some one has talked them into agreeing with the French Indians to stop fighting. I have shamed them out of that bargain; but I must know who carried the talk to them. Be quick!"

Old Papa made off. Perrot rejoined his Excellency and told of the orders he had given the old man.

"But will they confide in him?" anxiously asked Denonville. "We have enough trouble without having a traitor sapping the courage of our allies."

"He has lived long among them. He is more red than white. While they are in a rage they may tell him something. If he fails I will send Dubeau among his half-brothers, the Hurons."

In a short time Papa La Blanche returned and reported to Perrot and the commander:

"They would not talk. I did not try them; for on entering the camp I saw a small belt hanging on the bough of a tree. They must have put it there right after you left them."

"The French Iroquois wouldn't give a belt to Mackinac Indians to stop fighting. They would simply smoke on the bargain," said Perrot.

Then to the governor:

"Monsieur, I fear this is more serious than we even have believed."

Of La Blanche he asked—

"What kind of a belt?"

"It was folded over a bough. I dare not show I saw it. I don't know how long it is, but it is six strings wide. It showed a beaver before a bark house."

"——!" ejaculated Perrot, his face growing grim. "A Seneca belt, inviting the beaver Indians—that is, the Western tribes—to enter the Long House. They have actually received a Seneca belt and were going to retain it!"

"The beads were purple and white. The beaver and house were in white beads," continued La Blanche.

"The Mackinac Indians are invited to come in peace to a peaceful Long House," translated Perrot. "Thank God, they've refused the belt! La Blanche, go back and hide near the tree. Some one will come for that belt. The man who brought it from the Senecas will take it from the tree and return it."

La Blanche hurried away and Perrot continued:

"Monsieur the governor, I can not say if your savages received a belt. I do not think so. The Ottawas and Hurons in accepting the belt were to influence your savages to join in the peace. If your savages did receive a belt and kept it they will return it when they know the Mackinac Indians have sent theirs back."

"And you believe the man who brought the belt will risk taking it from the tree and carrying it back to the Senecas. I doubt that."

"The belt was sent. The Ottawas must return it. By this time they must have notified the bearer to come for it. Whoever that man is he is a traitor. I shall try to have him followed and killed. Whoever he is he came here with the army. No Seneca man has been in this camp."

"You suspect——?"

"No one. But the belt proves we have a traitor here. If it had not been for the bush loper we call the Wolverene I might not have learned the truth until too late. That would mean disaster to the expedition."

"I recall the fellow. Many complaints, I believe. Very much of a rascal. Well, keep me informed of all that happens and I will have some one sound our savages," said the governor.

IT WAS Carcajou whom Perrot had in mind as the man to complete the tragic business. He found him and dropped lazily down beside him. Carcajou at once complained:

"A little brandy, to offset the heat of the day and the rheum one gets from eating so much pork, would be good medicine for the stomach, m'sieur. I hope we shall have a big fight soon. It was more lively when I was in the camp of the Foxes at La Baye."

"You may have work you will like better than brandy, Wolverene," murmured Perrot "How would you like to track a traitor through the night?"

"You mean that Brouwer! I would gladly track him to ——!"

"It is not Brouwer. But the trail may lead you dangerously close to the Senecas."

"Good! I will bring back a dozen scalps and throw them at M'sieur Tonty's feet. I told him what I would do in this country, and we've had only one little fight. He will think poorly of me."

"If you are successful tonight he will have a high opinion of you, as will his Excellency. It will be more dangerous than dodging English bullets fired by Senecas in a bush fight."

"Then look here, m'sieur. What are we waiting for? I have two feet. What path do I take?" impatiently demanded Carcajou.

"Here comes some one who should be able to tell us," answered Perrot as La Blanche trotted into the firelight and bore down upon them.

"What? Old Papa Foolish? He's a million years old and can't even remember how many red wives he's had," grumbled Carcajou in disgust.

La Blanche squatted on his heels and whispered:

"It was dark, but I knew him when he snatched the belt from the bough. John Black took the belt."

"Black!" exclaimed Carcajou. "Why, he was cut off from the army and had to hide a day and a night before he could join us!"

"Hid with the Senecas until he could bring in their belt and secretly give it to the Ottawas and Hurons," sternly corrected Perrot.

He rose to his feet and rapidly continued:

"The Senecas have retreated toward La Conception as the priests call it, or Totiakton, as the savages call it. It's about four leagues from this camp. The belt will be delivered at some place between here and Totiakton. After your man!"

Carcajou got on his feet, handed his rifle to La Blanche and warned—

"Have this good gun for me when I come back, Old Simple, or I'll dance your thin scalp lock."

"You'll leave your fine gun, my little one?" reproached La Blanche.

"Be sure *you* don't leave it," admonished Carcajou.

Without waiting to be advised further by Perrot he walked to the northern edge of the camp and well beyond the fires and halted under a tree. Flames danced from many fires, and the smoke from these hid the stars.

The bush loper knew that a man seeking the Senecas with the least loss of time would leave the camp on the north side. If Black was the man, and if he planned to return to the army, he must travel fast. Carcajou had scarcely composed himself to wait when La Blanche, as if possessing the eyes of an owl, trotted up to him and softly informed the other:

"He has just entered the woods runners' camp. He should be coming soon."

He turned away and made for the Indian fires on the right of the army before Carcajou could ask any questions. Carcajou remained seated, leaning against the tree. One approaching from the fires would not observe him unless possessing the forest eyes of Old Papa, while his own view, toward the fires, would be excellent.

After a few minutes his imagination began bothering him. What if Black had risked the loss of time and had left the camp on the east side? He almost wished he had remained in camp and had started trailing his man there.

Several figures, like clean-cut silhouettes, passed between him and the fires and were near enough for him to hear some of their conversation. He gathered that they were *coureurs de bois*, bound for the Ottawa camp to gamble at the game of "straws." He heard the Picard crying: *"Chok! Chok!"* meaningless as words but supposed to bring good luck to a player.

He was staring after them idly and was about to switch his gaze back to the south when the rearmost figure in the group halted and allowed the others to pass on

without him. This figure then turned toward Carcajou's tree, advanced rapidly and passed him on the run, and so closely that the watcher could hear the deep breathing.

Carcajou softly came to his feet and felt at his back to make sure his ax was securely in place. He drew his knife, to be ready for the emergency should the man turn back to make sure he was not being followed, and glided in pursuit. As he drew farther from the fire he had to depend on his feet and ears. If Black would travel fast with the minimum amount of noise he must keep to the deep and narrow trail. So the Wolverene's feet did service for eyes and soon came to the ancient path that led south from the Seneca landing to Totiakto. Carcajou unhesitatingly turned into this and followed it north. In places the bushes encroached upon it.

After a few minutes of travel he heard the soft swishing of a bush ahead, and he knew Black was advancing with less caution. Doubtless the traitor reasoned that, with the far Indians and the warriors from the St. Lawrence all but completing their agreement to stop fighting, there would be no red scouts out this night. Following the narrow slot carefully and always exercising infinite patience in passing through the occasional patches of interlocked branches, he kept after his man.

He heard his quarry splash through a shallow stream and took care to make no sound when he came to the water. Beyond the brook the path entered an open grove. This quickly gave way for a stretch of open country littered with briers and bush growth. The stars were brilliant after the storm, and Carcajou traversed the opening at a smart pace, fearing the Senecas might be close. He soon came to thick timber, and the trail entered it through a tunnel of overhanging branches. Carcajou bent double to escape these and was on his hands and knees when his fingers rested on forest mold.

Glad to be in the clean woods even if unable to see a foot ahead, he was about to stand erect when his foot hit a bush and gently agitated the top. The sound was slight, but it was instantly greeted by a blinding flare and a heavy report a dozen feet away. Reacting mechanically, he had scrambled on all-fours to a tree before fully comprehending the situation.

As he stood erect it filled him with chagrin to know that Black had discovered he was being trailed and laid an ambush. Only the fact he was bending very low when the gun was fired had saved him from receiving the heavy ball.

With his knife ready he glided three feet toward the spot where the gun had discharged and halted behind an oak. He had expected to hear the sound of the gun being reloaded. He heard nothing. The flash of the gun must have revealed to Black that he had missed.

Carcajou remained motionless for a minute waiting for the traitor to betray his position by either renewing his flight or by repeating his attempt to kill. Carcajou never had had a high opinion of Black's courage, and now he was compelled to believe the man was brave enough to stand his ground.

Bending down until his hand touched the ground, he picked some last year s acorns and gently tossed one a short distance away. It made a faint sound. He waited a moment and tossed another to strike a short distance from the first. The quiet remained undisturbed. After another brief pause he tossed the third acorn, but this hit against the bole of a tree and bounded with a second audible impact to the ground.

Carcajou knew the ruse was spoiled and wondered how closely Black could guess his position. Black had not made a sound to betray his position, and the bush loper began building up a deep respect for the fellow's woodcraft. He received a geniune thrill when he heard a faint sound within a few feet of him and on the opposite side of the tree. He was amazed that the man should come to attack him, but decided that Black had no idea he was advancing on the Wolverene.

Now he heard him again. It was like an exhalation after the breath had been held overlong. Black was actually on the opposite side of the tree. Eyes were useless in that darkness. Carcajou fancied he could hear fingers softly moving around the trunk on his right. Squatting on his heels, he faced in that direction; and almost at once Black was around the tree from the opposite side and had stumbled against him and was delivering a wild blow that passed over his shoulder.

Carcajou dropped his knife, seized the traitor's wrist and endeavored to yank him

over his head and to the ground. Black saved himself by locking his legs about the bush loper's limbs, and the two commenced rolling over and over.

Black raised a loud cry that ended abruptly as his face was plunged into the rain-soaked leaves. Carcajou endeavored to grip his throat while maintaining the hold on the knife hand. Black hugged in his chin and essayed to bite the groping fingers.

They were now stretched out on their sides, their legs locked. Black's right hand, imprisoned at the wrist but still gripping the knife, was pressed hard against his chest. His left arm worked around Carcajou's waist and grabbed at the ax. Carcajou whirled on his back to prevent the ax from being drawn and this time his left hand escaped the snapping jaws and sank into his opponent's neck. This grip, with only the thumb doing any damage, could not entirely shut off the man's wind. He breathed with a hissing intake while his left hand frantically clawed into the moldy leaves to get at the belted ax.

Carcajou made a supreme effort to increase the pressure of the throat hold, and Black struggled mightily to throw himself on his right side that he might go after the ax again. Carcajou braced against this maneuver and continued the pressure on the throat. Black's lungs were not receiving enough air, and his exertions began to weaken him. He tried again to use his teeth and only permitted the deadly fingers to dig deeper. He began kicking his legs desperately.

Carcajou suddenly took the initiative and slowly straightened his left arm a bit, forcing back the savage head. Black met this attack by working his knees upward until they were braced against Carcajou's legs; then he stabbed his stiffened fingers savagely at where he hoped the Wolverene's neck would be, but struck the jawbone.

Defeated in this, Black summoned all his waning strength and threw himself backward to tear clear of the smothering throat hold. He met with no opposition, as the Wolverene went with him, while the knife hand was pushed inward and upward; and as the Wolverene came uppermost he reared back and then threw himself down on the shaft of the knife and drove the long blade through the traitor's heart.

Then for a minute he lay beside the dead man while his deep chest rose and fell. When he had satisfied his lungs he whispered:

"*Pardieu!* Renegade, traitor, murderer! But you brought me a better fight than many a better man can ever bring!"

Rising to a sitting posture, he fumbled with the inert form until he found that which he sought—the belt of the Senecas. Crawling to his feet, he recovered his knife at the foot of the oak and remembered he had not yet scalped his victim and had nothing but the belt to prove he had made a kill. He hesitated, then mumbled:

"No. He lived bad; but he died bravely. He shall keep his hair till some of our savages find him."

THE way was open back to the army, and he had done all that Perrot had directed. He ran the belt through his fingers and considered the situation. He had a feeling that his work was not finished. Perrot and Denonville were much pleased to have the Ottawas and Hurons refuse the belt; but it could not be considered rejected until it had been returned. Once in the Senecas' hands they would abandon all attempts to form an alliance with the Mackinac tribes. If they did not receive it they would send another talk; and there was no telling what the Ottawas would hold to the next time.

"*Ma foi!* M'sieur Perrot talked to me only half enough. The Senecas must be made to understand our savages are loyal. When they know that they will be discouraged. I was to follow and kill Black; but not a word about what I should do with the belt. But a rejected belt must go back. If found by the side of Black they might not know if he were returning from the Ottawas with it or carrying it to the Ottawas."

Then he chuckled at the audacity of his inspiration. The belt should be delivered. The night was young, and some of the Senecas would be encamped not far above on the path to Totiakton.

The bush loper was recalling various boasts he had made to Tonty. The Italian knight had killed a savage with a blow of his copper fist. The Wolverene had won no distinctive honors.

But he had lived long enough among red men to understand their great respect for a belt of wampum. From times immemorial

the bearer of a belt was immune. There had been rare instances where a bearer of belts had been murdered, but such infrequent crimes were abhorrent in the estimation of the murderer's own people. Even tribes engaged in bitter warfare respected each other's belt bearers. Surely the Senecas, one of the Three Elder Brothers in the League of the Iroquois, would respect their own wampum. If he lived to return and tell his story Carcajou knew his name would be repeatedly spoken wherever the *coureurs de bois* paddled their canoes or built a camp-fire. The good opinion of the wild brotherhood was dearer to the Wolverene than praise from a high official.

So vanity and natural courage prompted him to complete the dead man's errand. He believed Perrot would approve. He thought highly of Perrot's good opinion. His Excellency would be pleased to learn the Senecas were losing some of their fighting spirits after being told that the red horde with the invading army would not stop fighting.

Carcajou, however, was not looking for praise from Denonville so much as he was hoping for a pardon. If all offenses charged against him were washed out he would be good, he believed, for another five years of doing as he pleased before being brought to book.

"*Pardieu!* But how those sad rascals of woods runners will talk about me," he told himself. "And Chevalier Tonty! Surely he will agree it is easier to strike a savage with his fist than it is to walk unarmed into a nest of Seneca snakes."

Having decided to deliver the belt, his preparations for the dangerous business were simple. He stripped off his shirt and hung it in the oak behind which he had treed himself. He buried his knife and ax under the mold of leaves, for a bearer of belts must carry no weapons. Then, holding the purple-and-white wampum in one hand, he started on a run along the path, his left hand extended to prevent collision with a tree.

The path was deeply worn and made but few windings, and with his feet for eyes he made excellent time. Nor did he make any effort to conceal his presence.

Under the hot summer night he ran about an English mile and was soaked with sweat when he lessened his stride. He smelled smoke. Soon he was glimpsing the flames of several fires and knew he was approaching an opening where he would face the climax of his daring.

The padding of moccasined feet behind him gave him a thrill, although he had been expecting to hear the Seneca outposts fall in behind him. First one man ran behind him, then another; and by the time he reached the edge of the growth and was entering the opening he knew a dozen or more warriors were blocking any retreat. But he did not once glance back.

Falling into a walk with the men pressing so close behind him that their deep breathing was audible, Carcajou lifted the belt high and cried to the camp:

"Ho! Ho! They say a bearer of belts comes to the Senecas!"

Those who were awake in the camp had made no move when he broke from the woods and the flaring light revealed him to be a white man. As he called out, those who were sleeping instantly sat up and took in the situation at a glance.

"Ho! Ho! Men of the Tsonnontouans! They say he brings back a belt the Hurons, the Ottawas and the French Iroquois refuse to pick up. He has run very fast. He is tired and hungry and needs a mat and meat."

From over his shoulder a voice called out:

"He shall rest. There is meat in a kettle."

And the speaker glided by him and preceded him to men now stringing out in a half-circle and faced about, and cried—

"Hail, belt carrier!"

The half circle of warriors, now seated, stared at him curiously, savagely and even admiringly but remained silent. Carcajou stalked forward, holding the belt before him. Some one threw dry brush on the central fire, and the leaping flames brightly illumined the scene. Ignoring the men behind him, the Wolverene walked inside the bow of seated men, and the dozen at his back spread out, and he was surrounded.

The man who had given greetings spread a painted deerskin, and Carcajou seated himself on it. Another man brought a kettle of meat from a fire and a gourd of water and a wooden platter. Carcajou hung the belt over his left shoulder, ate heartily and drank the water and heard no sound while so doing except for the labored breathing of those nearest him, who were consumed with rage on recognizing the belt.

After satisfying his appetite, Carcajou took the belt in his hand and stood up and swept his gaze over the stern faces. He betrayed no surprize when he discovered Dead Bear and Brouwer standing outside the circle and behind the Seneca who had spread the deerskin and was now waiting for him to speak.

Carcajou's first words were:

"Let the man who has been whipped come here and talk for me. I have met Senecas only in war, and one can not talk with dying men."

Glints of admiration shone in the ferocious eyes, for the Senecas held courage to be the highest of all qualities; and this white man, with the bold tongue and chin thrust belligerently forward, met with their approval.

Dead Bear, wearing a blanket to hide his back although the night was hot, slowly entered the circle, his eyes glowing with hate. As he took his position on Carcajou's right the latter said:

"Where is the chief to receive my talk and this belt? I will talk only to a chief."

A middle-aged Seneca slowly got on his feet and shrilly replied—

"A man of the Bear clan will receive your talk."

Although Carcajou had proven he could converse without the aid of an interpreter he turned expectantly to Dead Bear and waited. Dead Bear added the speaker's name, saying—

"He Has Claws, of the Bear clan, will hear your talk."

"Then this is the talk the Ottawas and Hurons send to the Senecas by a mighty white chief of the Wolverene clan," began Carcajou, now speaking in French, and pausing at proper intervals for Dead Bear to translate. "They say this belt, sent them by the Senecas and asking them to stop fighting, is a bad belt. They say the Senecas are whipped and do not want to fight. They say they will pick up a belt only when it is sent by brave men."

Inarticulate sounds of rage ran around the circle. Carcajou, without removing his gaze from the chief, continued:

"They say they came many sleeps to fight the Senecas and will not stop fighting so long as they can catch a Seneca and scalp him. That is the talk they gave to the bearer of this belt."

With an air of disdain he tossed the rejected wampum at the feet of the chief and sat down. While he talked he had listened carefully to detect any interpolations; but Dead Bear had filled his office faithfully.

The chief stared at him for fully a minute, then glanced down at the belt and slowly replied with Dead Bear repeating each phrase:

"The belt we offered to the Western tribes is a very small belt. We send big belts only to real men. When they sent us a talk by a white man, asking us to send them a belt, we sent this little one. The Ottawas and Hurons must be afraid to leave the soldiers and go into the woods. They send back the belt by a white man."

Carcajou stood up and explained:

"They have killed and eaten so many Senecas their eyes are filled with sleep."

The chief's lips twitched, but he controlled his anger. Again the animal noises of rage traveled the circle. The chief said:

"They sent a very brave man. He does us more honor than could all the fish-eating Ottawas and Hurons hiding behind the Great Lakes. The Ottawas and Hurons are not thinking of sleep tonight, but are afraid they can not run fast enough when the sun comes back. If they have found a dead Seneca and have eaten him they will have more courage. But no meat is strong enough to keep wild men with tails hanging down in a fight very long. We do not eat bad flesh. No Ottawas go into our kettles. Even our dogs will not eat them.

"You, white man, are a brave man. Here is a string of wampum to open all roads to you while you are going back to your friends."

He was selecting a strand of white wampum from a heavy string on a robe by the fire when Brouwer grossly violated red etiquette by advancing into the circle and picking up the rejected belt. Holding it before the chief's angry eyes, he stroked it and then stared at the red smears on his fingers.

He swung the belt about, held his hand closer to the fire and harshly cried:

"There is blood on this belt!"

His intrusion was forgotten. The wide circle leaned forward. He Has Claws took the belt and examined it. Of Carcajou he sternly demanded—

"How comes fresh blood on a belt from this nation?"

Carcajou stood up and carelessly replied:

"I do not know. I am only a bearer of belts. Perhaps an Ottawa dropped it where he had been cutting up a Seneca man."

Muffled explosions of rage greeted this speech. The chief waited until silence was restored and announced:

"This man is a very brave man. He will go back to his friends and we will catch him and kill him and put him in a kettle. He has done us honor to come through the Great Black Doorway with brave words in his mouth. He will make a good fight before he dies. We will take him alive and see how long we can keep him alive under torture."

Murmurs of dissent arose, but none was prepared to stand up and offer objections. A bearer of belts was safe in his office. Carcajou called out to Brouwer in French:

"M'sieur Runaway will have to find something else to talk about. Remember, and be very careful of your hair. It belongs to me. When I take it it must not be filled with burrs."

"—— you!" grunted Brouwer in English. "You're not out of the trap yet."

IN ANOTHER minute Carcajou would have received his white wampum, giving him safety for the return trip, had there not come a second interruption. A runner, glistening with sweat, ran into the camp from the east side and, panting for breath said something to the Seneca nearest him. This man faced the chief and announced:

"Here is something to hear. The French have caught fifty of our men near Cataraqui and will send them over the big water to be tied in the big canoes of the Great Onontio*. This Seneca man was told this by an Onondaga man."

Dead Bear groaned and exclaimed:

"They will be tied to a paddle and whipped by the *comite!* Their raw backs will run blood. They will never wash the marks of the whips from their flesh!"

And he dropped his blanket to his loins and turned about to show the crisscross pattern of scars he had received in a royal galley.

"Seneca men can use a whip!" cried Brouwer. "French backs can be scarred and made raw."

"Ho! Ho!" approved many in the circle, and they stared hungrily at the strong back of the Wolverene.

*King Louis was the Great Onontio.

The man of the Bear clan lifted his hand and, lowering on Brouwer, told his ferocious audience:

"We are men. Here is a brave man who brings a belt. He talks like a chief. He has whipped none of our people. He is a bearer of belts. We must keep the faith. Let his path be smooth and clear when he goes back."

Dead Bear, quivering with rage, had nothing to say, Brouwer crossed and stood behind Carcajou and whispered:

"You've put your thick neck in a fast trap at last, Wolverene. Even if they send you back you'll never reach the Irondequoit landing. You'll pay dear for that rifle yet."

"I hear a dog barking at my heels," Carcajou called out.

"Let the path be clear. Let this brave man start back. The Ottawas are bad flesh, but our belt was sent to them and they have returned it. A belt bearer can not be hurt, even when coming from the Ottawas."

While much enraged by the news of the Senecas captured near Fort Frontenac and doomed to the French galleys, and while lusting to test the white man's courage by various tortures, the circle offered no objections. They approved of Carcajou's bearing and bold words. Those men completing the circle behind him silently shifted their position, leaving the way open. The chief advanced and gave Carcajou the white wampum.

Carcajou faced Brouwer and reminded him:

"Remember, M'sieur Rascal! Your scalp pinned on a tree when I meet you again. If it was brave hair I would stretch it on a hoop and paint it."

But Brouwer was not to be intimidated. He loudly cried:

"This man wants a fight! Let him stand before me! Let us see who is the stronger!"

No spectacle, except that of the Wolverene passing under torture, could have pleased the Senecas more. And their eyes glistened with longing, although they knew it could not be. But Carcajou, eager to step from under the protection of his office, smiled contentedly and begged the chief:

"You are a brave man. Let a man of the Wolverenes show you how to fight."

He Has Claws frowned and reminded him:

"This is a bad talk from a belt bearer. Let our white brother meet this man when we next fight Onontio. He holds road wampum. He must not be hurt until after he reaches his friends."

Carcajou was disappointed in having the proposed duel prevented. But his heart was light with elation at the success of his audacious adventure.

He smiled as he pictured Perrot's surprize on learning how doubly successful had been his mission. He was told to find and kill Black. And Black was dead. But of even greater importance was the first-hand information he had obtained as to the presence of a strong band of the enemy so near the army.

He enjoyed the dramatics of the situation too much to take a hasty leave. Never had he dramatized himself into such a savage setting.

He turned his back on the chief and leisurely walked toward the opening in the circle. At almost every step he paused to stare insolently into a grim face. The Senecas met his gaze without appearing to see him. Carcajou had reached the opening in the circle and had exhausted the situation when a quivering, long-drawn-out cry from the direction he was to take brought every warrior to his feet. They closed compactly around the Wolverene almost before he realized it. All were staring toward the south. The chief worked his way to Carcajou's side.

Dead Bear was the first to speak.

"Something bad has been found!"

He Has Claws ordered:

"Let the belt bearer wait. There may be danger in his path."

"A Woverene can clear a path," haughtily said Carcajou; but despite his bold bearing he believed he was in great danger.

The cry was repeated at frequent intervals and sounded closer each time. There was no mistaking its somber significance. A dead man had been found; one whose death could cause no exultation.

After another minute of tense silence a Seneca ran from the woods and came to the mass of warriors and announced:

"The white man who was with us a day and who took our belt to the Ottawas has been killed on the path where it leaves the woods to cross through bushes and briers. We heard a gun fired and hunted to learn who fired it. We found the dead man."

"——! So that's it!" yelled Brouwer in English.

And he threw back his head and laughed uproariously. The Senecas glared at him angrily. He hastily explained:

"I laugh at what we find in our trap. A wolverene! Our new white friend was bringing you back the belt. This white man here killed him at the other side of the woods. Now will you send him back to his people?"

And he laughed in Carcajou's face and, sniffing the air, taunted:

"I smell smoke. I smell red-hot axheads burning French flesh."

Carcajou tried to strike him in the face; but Dead Bear, behind him, seized his arms and held him helpless.

Dead Bear whispered in French:

"I know now why I couldn't shoot or poison you. You were to die here. To be days dying."

Carcajou believed him and made no reply, but held his head high and stared at the spot where the path left the woods. No other words were spoken, As in a tableau the compact body of men faced the oaks. Several figures broke from cover and came toward the fires. They were carrying a burden on a stretcher made of their guns and short sticks.

The Senecas fell back, forming a circle. The bearers advanced near the central fire and deposited their burden. The knife handle still protruded from Black's breast. Carcajou marveled to behold the placid expression on the dead man's face. In a twinkling Death had wiped away all fear and hate.

The chief stared down on the dead man; then turned on Carcajou and quietly demanded—

"Did you kill this man?"

"I killed him. He was first a traitor to the English and then to the French. Only a brave man should carry a belt to the Tsonnontouans."

"Now we will see how bravely this brave man can die," said Dead Bear. "He has killed a bearer of belts."

The chief asked—

"Where was the man found?"

"Where the path leaves the woods to cross through the bushes and briers," repeated the man who first brought the news.

The chief meditated, while angry mutterings were heard on all sides and the

warriors gazed at Carcajou with wolfish expectancy. A newcomer, unnoticed until he reached the edge of the circle, listened eagerly while a man softly explained the situation. Then he advanced and stood beside He Has Claws and declared—

"The man of the Bear clan is very wise."

Carcajou recognized the voice and, twisting his head, beheld Black Kettle, once his friend, but now painted and oiled and hungry to kill the French.

The chief spoke, saying:

"We know this white man brought us a belt. He was a belt bearer when he came to us. We know he killed a man who was carrying a belt. He says so. He is a brave man, and his tongue is straight."

"A man who kills a bearer of belts is not a belt bearer. He is a stealer of belts. A bearer of belts carries no weapons. This man was armed, ready to kill" argued Dead Bear.

"The Wolverene carries no weapons," defended Carcajou. "That man is dead by his own knife."

Brouwer hotly denied this, but several warriors briefly examined the handle of the knife, and, although Black had stayed with them but one day, they remembered it distinctly. Carcajou continued, saying:

"The Ottawas refused the belt and hung it on a tree. They did not ask this man to carry it back to the Senecas. It was for their great leader Perrot, favorite son of Onontio and called a chief among all the far tribes, to name the man to bring the belt here. Perrot wanted a brave man, and he named the Wolverene. The other man took the belt from the tree. He was followed and killed with his own knife."

He Has Claws was actuated by but one desire—to preserve the inviolability of a belt bearer's office. He walked apart and weighed the entire matter for some minutes. Then he came back and quietly said:

"This is what shall be. This man here, unarmed, brought a belt to this nation from the spot where that man was killed. The path shall be open and smooth to him back to the place where the dead man was found. When he passes that place he is not a bearer of belts; for he was not a bearer of belts until he killed a man at that place. He can be captured or killed after he passes where the other man was killed."

This decision brought a grim smile of admiration to Carcajou's face. The temper of the warriors instantly changed. Whoops of joy greeted the chief's decision.

Dead Bear released his hold on Carcajou's arms and with a grunt of satisfaction stepped over the stretcher and wrenched the mortal weapon loose and cried:

"He shall die by the knife he killed with. It is for the man who has been whipped to use this knife. It will stop the ache."

Other ambitious warriors did not relish this proposal. They were eager to make it a man-hunt, where each pursuer would have a chance to win distinction. Black Kettle, however, urged:

"It is right the man who has been whipped should now kill a Frenchman. Others may follow, but he should run ahead."

Glad to know the odds were somewhat reduced, yet knowing he stood no chance unarmed, with the escaped galley slave, Carcajou primed himself for the test. He demanded:

"I must have a start. I will not walk with this man down the path to be killed like a pig. Give me a start, or drag me down there. For I will not leave this camp unless I can go ahead. He is armed and I am not. Give me a knife and a start."

"You brought a belt. You will have no knife," coldly replied the chief. "But no man shall follow you until you reach the woods."

This decision was also applauded. Carcajou grimaced. The distance from where he stood to where the path entered the growth was but a short arrow-flight. Dead Bear was bending forward like a runner awaiting the signal, his sinewy limbs impatient for the trial of speed. Carcajou observed the triumphant expression on Dead Bear's face; and, desirous of making a fitting exit, he shrugged his shoulders, laughed loudly and boasted:

"You are children to think a dead bear can catch a live wolverene."

"He will do us great honor by dying very slowly if he is brought back alive," murmured He Has Claws.

Then to Carcajou—

"Go!"

TO BE CONCLUDED

STUMMICKS

by L Paul

Author of "Rabbit Foot"

"I AIN'T happy in my mind nor yet elsewhere," remarked Captain Salem as he teetered on his chair. "I ain't got anything to make me happy to begin with, for if there's pleasure in being a spare captain its bearings don't show on any chart I've seen, and so far I ain't dropped hook where it lies hid."

"You are suffering," old Thompson told him, "you are suffering, Salem, from the common ill hereabouts, and its name is Lemuel, the he-cook of this establishment."

Thompson was harbormaster of Helmshaven and as such was a man of substance, a man used to ordering ships about, and hence a man who considered his opinions as law to sea-going folk. The two of them were sitting on the veranda of Asa Bent's boarding house after supper.

" 'Tis well enough for such as you to diagnose my trouble," Captain Salem chided. "You with a good shore-going job. But me, I'm a 'Go-from-you-come-to-you' as the Scotsman called the concertina. I'm the Towboat Company's spare captain and that means I must keep a room ashore. Not for me a snug skipper's cabin where I may stow my gear, nor yet have I the run of the galley aboard any craft, the cooks treating me as what I am, a temporary nuisance. I am a nautical frog, Thompson, and I leap from ship to ship whenever a skipper craves his annual bat or wants to kick up his heels ashore; and it's sick I am getting of the life."

"I know the sorrow that is upon you, Cap'n Salem," Thompson said, for he was a man who never let another's arguments spoil his pleasure in stating his own. "I know the reason you peak and pine. And it is not the jumping hither and yon that ruins you. 'Tis the five doughnuts you are cuddling under your bosom; for a man who eats five of Lemuel's doughnuts may as well ask for quotations on his tombstone, and that's a fact."

Now Lemuel was the cook at Asa Bent's, where these two boarded, along with other hardy men, and, as is the custom with food butchers, he was fond of coming out to gloat over his victims, as Captain Salem knew.

So the captain just tucked away Thompson's words for they had a bit of truth in them, Lemuel the he cook being most dangerous to those who patronized him; and besides Salem was ever a man to adopt any one else's statements if they were made positive and spoken loud.

"And," thought he, "I will reason with the man, not too roughly, but firmly, when he comes out here to gloat."

And with that he began to think of all that Lemuel had probably done to him during the year he had stopped off and on, in the way of spare captains, at this boarding house.

It was but a few moments before Lemuel the he cook came sauntering out. Though he committed capital crimes every time he came near a stove, he had a blind unreasoning pride in his profession, and he hoped before he died that he might hear a word of praise from some of his customers. It was his habit to stand about on the veranda after

the dishes were washed up, eagerly waiting for some lunkhead to remark that the pie was like mother's or the scrod was cooked better than the cook of a trawler could do it. And though it was a case of hope deferred he clung like a child to his belief that some day a man with a soul like Ananias's would come along and tell the grand lie about his cooking. But the word he got this night was not what he was looking for.

"It is not proper that I should insult my owners," complained Captain Salem. "And insult them I will, whether they know it or not, when I go aboard the *Midge* this night to relieve old Wilkie, me as I am now and her as well-found a tugboat as man ever saw."

"And how will ye insult them?" asked Lemuel. "How can owners be insulted?"

"By smuggling chain cable aboard in my stummick," Captain Salem told him. "Oh, them doughnuts tasted all right when hot, the whole five of them, but it's heavy and solid they are now and apt to be mistook for chain cable, as I have said. So when I relieve old Skipper Wilkie this night I must keep the sorrow that is in me secret, else, look you, Lemuel, it would hurt his pride if he thought me mistrustful of such chain cable as he has aboard of her, and hence bringing my own with me."

With that he stopped, for he saw that Lemuel had got his drift, and he was never a man to waste words.

"A man who eats five doughnuts has no right to kick," Lemuel protested and quite mad he was, too, for like all bad cooks he was proud of his misdeeds. "And a big lummox that sits about and loafs ashore and then takes his exercise sleeping in a tugboat's wheelhouse afloat can't kick if his stummick gets flabby and hurts when he sits in against real man's vittles. Ye should get out of the rut, Salem," he went on, edging away, "and ye should occupy your mind with fine thoughts and your body with hard exercise."

And with that he went inside, for he felt this might hold Salem for a minute, but he doubted whether 'twould silence him for long. In his own heart Lemuel the he cook was not any too sure about those doughnuts.

"Occupy mind and body, is it?" Old Salem turned to Thompson the harbormaster. "Now could I but get that Lemuel afloat for a bit I would show him occupation and to spare."

"And yet there is truth in what he says," Thompson answered, for he had been silent overlong, and if he could not advance his own opinions he might still expand somebody else's. "I have noticed that you sit about here a lot, Salem, when ashore, and while 'tis certain that Lemuel is hard on the constitution, a man should at least be cultivating his mind, though miserable in health. Now if you'd take in the lectures they have at the hall Wednesday nights you might learn something, and besides it might take your mind off what Lemuel does to each and every one of us that boards here. And even if that doesn't work you might comfort yourself by remembering why the crowd of us stick, trifling with death as we do."

"Which is a thing I can not figure out," Salem put in.

"Which is but the old tale of a choice of evils," old Thompson went on. "While there are other and better boarding houses, they one and all are dangerous to a single man, for I have noticed that when a man eats good vittles for a spell he is apt to take a look at the cook and believe that handsome is that handsome does. And if that look is admiring and the cook knows her business it is all over but the renting of what the papers call the "love nest." And nobody can deny that while we suffer here the pangs of death we do not get lured into matrimony."

He got up, lit his pipe and started up the street.

"And you will not come to the lecture this night?" he called back. "'Tis about the strenuous life, Salem."

"I will not," Salem told him firmly. "And besides I am to have the proud privilege of conducting the lecturer himself up to Fairport in the *Midge*, him having to make connections there with the Boston boat, and having a drag with our manager. And what use is there in paying good money to hear a man gab and then getting it all over again for nothing later on?"

And at that old Thompson the harbormaster went up the street toward the hall, crossing over to the other side whenever he saw in his path a likely looking widow or one of those elderly single women who are slow to lose hope and who hunt down well-fixed old bachelors of his sort.

As for Captain Salem, he sat there cuddling his sore stomach and the five doughnuts and vowing that more of those

hefty bits of confectionery would hereafter never pass his lips.

And after a while when it got dark and the lights of the *Midge* showed up at the pierhead he went indoors and slipped on a clean shirt and collar.

"For," thought he, "if I must entertain this lecturer all the way to Fairport I must not let him think he has to do with some simple roughneck. And a white collar will demonstrate to him that I am civilized, more or less."

Then, having cleaned up, he stepped up the street to the hall, intending to meet the man as he came out and lead him down to the wharf.

There was a sizable crowd at the hall, and Salem, not wanting to poke his nose inside lest old Thompson might plume himself that his words had brought him, just slid up to an open window and listened. And there, for sure, was Mr. Willoughby Tatt, the lecturer, a little man with heavy black ribbons on his eyeglasses, who had that audience gasping and applauding by turns. For he had the gift of gab developed till it would have been the envy of a foreman stevedore.

He was winding up his speech as Captain Salem began to listen.

"And so, my friends," said he, "if the race is to survive we must live dangerously, face the lion in the path, seek the great open spaces——"

And Salem noticed that Lige Blewett, the druggist, who had never been two miles away from his shop since his nice golden pestle and mortar sign went up, was applauding like mad, not to mention Barney Carrigan, who had lived dangerously for some fifty years by the washing his poor wife took in. But the little lecturer, not heeding all their clapping, was going right on.

"—the great open spaces, my friends, whither we must flee to escape this routine that is the curse of mankind—" and a whole lot more of it.

And then chairs scraped and the crowd began to come out and Captain Salem, straightening his tie, pushed through them to get his man. For the tide was right and he wanted to get away quickly.

"Now if I'd known his talk was like that," thought Salem as he approached the lecturer, "now if I'd known it was man's talk, this, and if I'd figured this professional speecher was real people, I'd have spent my money to hear the whole of it, for though I may get it out of him on the way to Fairport, yet it sounds like something a man should hear as often as he could."

And with that he came alongside of Willoughby Tatt and made himself known to him.

CAPTAIN SALEM slipped softly along the deck of the tugboat *Midge* and tapped at the engineer's cabin door. Jethro Kane, a tall, melancholy man, stuck his head out in response and his deep voice boomed his—

"Hello, Skipper! Nigh ready?"

"Hush, now," Salem cautioned him. "Hush, Jethro, for I have a passenger taking a nap in the wheelhouse and not for worlds would I wake him. A man of words he is, and after a bit when he's slept, he'll be spouting wisdom to me."

"And who might he be?" asked Jethro curiously.

"None other than the lecturer of the evening up at the hall who goes to Fairport with us," Salem told him. "Now if you'd see a man who don't look like what he is, come take a peek at this one."

And the two of them tiptoed forward where Mister Willoughby Tatt was curled up on the wheelhouse locker taking a nap.

"Now would you think that such a man could live among tigers or at any rate lions?" Salem asked. "Would you say that yonder wee man had spent years living dangerous in the wide open spaces, wherever they may be?"

"I would not," Jethro decided.

"And yet, 'tis true," Salem assured him. "And if you could hear even as much of his talk as I did, sure you would be of it. And sense he spoke, too. All about routine and how it kills the race."

"And what may routine be?" asked Jethro Kane, the engineer. For he was a man of no book learning.

"I'm not any too clear save that we've got it," Salem explained. "But I think it is what folks like us does, running up and down and in circles, and with but the same old job, day in, day out. And 'tis the ruin of us Americans, or will be in the end. But when the little man wakes up I will ask him about it. For the present he must sleep, being tired out explaining the dangerous life to them shore-going folks, who are naturally

thick-headed. And speaking of ruin reminds me that I have the pains of death in my stummick from the vittles Lemuel, the he-cook up to Asa's, chucks at us, so I will now go to the galley and put a poultice on them same pains."

Which he did, the poultice being a big mess of beans, a cup or so of black coffee and half a pie. While he felt a bit better, he was far from happy inside when he stepped into the wheelhouse and called his crew to cast off.

His guest was still sleeping.

"I'll not wake him yet," Salem decided. "There's four hours and more between here and Fairport, and with bad weather maybe we'll be five."

He looked up at the sky.

"Yes," he thought, "with bad weather it'll be five hours for sure and 'tis certain that if we can show this adventurous little man a bit of a storm he'll feel more at home and talk freer about this here dangerous life in the open spaces that is reputed to be so healthy. And if there is anything to lift the load off my stummick I want to know about it."

The wheelhouse of the *Midge* was a wide, low place. The steering engine, right underneath the wheel, spluttered and sent off the smell of hot oil. Across the back of the house stretched the broad locker where Mr. Willoughby Tatt slept.

Near the wheel and the bell pulls was a speaking tube connecting with the engine room and terminating at either end in a sort of horn that amplified any sounds. When the captain pulled the bells the clang of them boomed out of that speaking tube, which was a good check for him—because bell wires on a tugboat are likely to fail when annoying things occur and the skipper starts reaching for the brass bell pulls with both hands and all his muscle. The speaking tube was also convenient when at sea, if the engineer and captain were congenial souls, on good terms and not above a bit of gossip.

On such a night as this, with bad weather possible, the speaking tube might, Salem knew, be the only means of communication between the wheelhouse and the rest of the tug. For Salem had taken the *Midge* through stormy waters before this night, and he remembered how the waves broke over her blunt bows and swept aft. He knew that if the wind kept rising everything would be tied down before morning.

He edged away from the wharf slowly, swung wide in a curve and headed for the open sea.

It was dark in the wheelhouse. Outside, the sailor on watch paced from port to starboard and back again, squinting at the running lights, for which he was responsible. That was all he had to do, save for an occasional jaunt aft to make sure the towline was all right and not cutting or chafing.

Salem spun the wheel over and straightened away on his course, out past the islands at the harbor mouth. Then he swung upcoast toward Fairport. A brisk breeze was rising, and as the stubby little *Midge* hit open water the tide-rip began to throw quick seas at her bows; seas that joggled her a bit, tossing her like a cork.

"'Twill be a dirty night," thought Salem. "Such a night as will please Mister, yonder, though not dangerous on a strong little tug like the *Midge*."

And he turned to see if his guest still slept. In the darkness he could just make out the white grayness of Tatt's face. He was evidently still sleeping, but he was moaning softly.

"Nightmares," Salem concluded. "A man that's seen what he's seen and done what he's done will maybe suffer in his dreams; which same must be crammed with things that'd scare most men sick even if seen alone and not in bunches."

And for a moment he wondered whether it would be kinder to waken his guest and stop those same horrid visions. He decided not to.

AS THE tugboat got farther away from the shelter of the harbor she began to behave badly. The seas increased in size and commenced to climb over her bows. The sailor on watch went below for oilskins and then crouched down in the lee of the wheelhouse for shelter. Salem noticed that every time the *Midge* rolled his guest would roll with her. Once in a while he would nearly come to the edge of the locker, but by quick work with the helm Salem always prevented his falling quite over on to the floor. He regarded this as a sort of game, throwing the *Midge* into the crest of a roller every time Willoughby Tatt's position got dangerous. It was quite a game, too.

It was decidedly getting to be bad weather. Salem held the *Midge* on her course. No time now to think of the intellectual treat in store for him when his guest awoke and, stimulated by his surroundings, spoke his little piece about the dangerous life and the perils of routine. The main thing for the present was to keep the *Midge* above water and on her way. He even found the indoor sport of keeping Mr. Tatt on his locker impossible. For the *Midge* was well out, now making for the Cape, and clear of the last shelter this side of Fairport Harbor.

The sailor on watch started aft to take another look at the towline. He had scarcely passed the wheelhouse when a big wave climbed the bulwarks and surged along the deck.

" 'Tis to be hoped he seen that one first," thought Salem as he slammed tight the wheelhouse window that was open.

As if to reassure him, the speaking tube began to roar. It was the engineer.

"If you are short a sailor, Salem," he remarked, "if the man on watch ain't on watch you needn't worry."

"And where is he?" asked Salem.

"I was making the doors fast when that there big buster come aboard," Jethro explained, "and this here sailor come passing by a bit too swift. So me and a fireman hooked him, and at the present moment he's being drained out in the stokehold."

"Gettin' a mite dirty on deck," Salem returned.

"Want another man sent forward?" Jethro asked.

"Better not. If them running lights goes we won't be able to fix 'em. It'll be wetter before it's drier," Salem decided. "When that there swimmin' fool of a sailor gets dried out he can keep an eye to the towline aft. But forward? I reckon it ain't going to be healthy forward for a spell."

"How's them doughnuts settin'?"

Jethro laughed as he put the question, his mirth booming up the speaking tube.

"None too good. I put a bit o' decent grub on top of them, but it's all gone and they're acting lonely and disgusted." Salem paused as an inspiration struck him. "Tell you what, Jethro, pass the word to the galley that I'd like a bite and have 'em send her up in a bucket to keep her dry. Make it smart, too! 'Nother five minutes and they won't maybe be able to get forward."

"What'll you have?"

"I ain't fussy. A slab o' that cold roast pork and a hunk o' bread. I won't have much time for eating by the looks of things."

"D'you think you're the only busy man aboard," Jethro grumbled, "keeping me here at this danged private telephone, and me with the pumps kicking?"

Captain Salem could hear the big engineer as he moved away from his end of the speaking tube; could hear his voice as he bawled out a lazy fireman. He smiled. There would be no trouble about the steam with Jethro on the job.

But Mr. Willoughby Tatt was now awake, and if his previous groans had been the product of a nightmare, what, oh what could cause the piteous noises he was now making? Not that Captain Salem noticed him as he struggled to sit up on the edge of the locker, his feet braced against the heaving floor of the wheelhouse. Captain Salem was having troubles of his own. For the *Midge* had fallen off a bit from her course. A big sea caught her port bow, tossed her up, dropped her again, and the small hatch that led to the chain locker forward shook its cover free. The *Midge* was heading into the storm with a hole two-foot square wide open to whatever water might come aboard.

Captain Salem spun the wheel viciously. Then came a grinding, rending sound, and the teeth flew out of the rack of the steam gear. The gear was stripped.

Captain Salem slipped round past the useless steam gear and grabbed for the stand-by wheel forward of it, a huge wooden affair with great spokes. It must serve now, and muscle must take the place of steam. No more easy twirling of the little brass wheel, but instead, heaving and straining for hours on its big fellow.

The wheel was stiff. The *Midge's* regular captain had evidently not wasted oil on it. Salem found it hard to turn, and every surge of the sea threatened to heave the *Midge* off her course again.

He turned his head and shouted to his guest, the exponent of the life dangerous:

"Bear a hand! Bear a hand, Mister. Climb up on that there wheel and put your weight into her."

Willoughby Tatt rose, stood swaying there a moment, made a weak step or two toward the big wheel and collapsed against it, clutching it with desperate grip. As

everything was going around anyway a wheel was no worse than anything else to Mister Tatt.

Captain Salem bawled down the speaking tube:

"Chain locker's wide open, Jethro. Men forward!"

"Men on the way," Jethro's voice came back. "And say, Cap'n, if so be I can teach ye arithmetic, will ye figger this out. The bilge pump's emptyin' through a four-inch pipe and the main engine room ventilator's a foot. Now if so be ye must keep on usin' it for a periscope keep it above water. It's gettin' a mite damp down here."

"Stop grouchin'. Me an' Mister Tatt's doin' our best," Salem answered. "Tell the cook not to mind that grub."

"Choreboy's just went by with her," Jethro chuckled. "It beats the devil what kids'll risk. An' all for a stummick that don't appreciate vittles."

"You shut up," Salem warned him, for this was getting on tender ground. "You shut up an' shake some speed out o' them engines. If we can push her through this for ten minutes good and fast, we'll strike the off-shore current and there won't be so much sea."

On deck oilskin-clad figures were creeping forward, clinging grimly to whatever protection there was. The seas were rising all around the little tug, threatening to break over her bulwarks. Yet she rode them, save for the driving spray that came over the bow and the occasional huge wave that the best of skippers could not dodge. It was all in the night's work for these men, but it was dangerous enough.

Behind them came a smaller figure clutching a bucket. It was the choreboy. He tapped at the sliding door of the wheelhouse. Salem slid it open, grabbed him by the collar and yanked him in as another sea thudded over the bows and came aft, green water knee high.

"This ain't no place for a kid," he grumbled, pushing the little chap on to the locker. "Why don't you stick to the galley?"

"How'll I get to be a sailor peelin' spuds?" The choreboy, like all his kind, had his eyes on a promotion. "Here's the grub, Cap."

"Set her on the floor." Salem was busy with the big wheel. "I ain't got no time for grub. Hope them sailormen get that hatch cover on again before we take more water over the bows. Last buster sort o' missed it, comin' so fast and all, but another might well fill us forward and then you'd see what —— in a wheelhouse was. Once she gets down by the bows it's more like a shower bath than a wheelhouse this'll be," he explained to Willoughby Tatt. "But, Mister, ye don't look happy. Is it hunger?"

He kicked the bucket with the lunch in it across the floor.

"Help yourself to a bit o' pork, which is sustainin'."

He said no more, for ahead came three great waves each towering over the one before it.

"There'll be doings forward," thought Salem as he peered at the sheen of oilskins by the hatch.

The men had the cover on and were lashing it down as best they might.

He held the bow of the *Midge* fair at those three waves. She split the first, rose over it, came down as the second grew upward to meet her, and rose once more. This time she came down fair in the middle of the third great billow. It slid up over her bows and came cascading aft.

"Yon was a buster." Salem steadied the wheel as the third wave tore at the rudder. "But we're through. What's that?"

He felt cold wind on his face. The door of the wheelhouse on Tatt's side was open.

"He done it. That funny guy what was hangin' on the wheel," the choreboy explained. "After you slipped him the lunch he ups and outs quick as wink."

"The game little rooster." Salem searched the deck forward, where the men were starting aft. "He seen we was up against it an' he went out there to help. Hope that wave didn't get him."

He thrust his head out of the wheelhouse door on his own side and bawled—

"All safe, lads?"

"All safe an' all tight forrud," a voice answered.

Salem shut the door again.

"If that there little rooster wants to take a spell on deck I won't say nothin' agin it," he told the choreboy. "Sonny, you seen a man this night. When you grow up into somethin' useful you remember Mister Willoughby Tatt, the man that's led a dangerous life."

The speaking tube began to roar again.

"I'd like to know if these here moonlight

swimmers is goin' to keep it up continual," complained the voice of Jethro Kane. "It's gettin' so a man can't take a peek out of a porthole without havin' to go right out into the nasty wet an' win a medal lifesavin'. I had to open the engine room door to hook this last one, and I tell you it's wet down here in consekence."

"Who was it?" Salem asked.

"That there dangerous man ye showed me," Jethro returned. "He don't like it here, an' he speaks real strong about our smells, an' how we shouldn't have so much warm oil round here. An' the only other thing he can say is 'pork,' which same word he sort o' whispers off and on."

His voice faded. The speaking tube became mute.

Salem gave his whole attention to the wheel. He edged the tugboat across the seas as opportunity offered. In half an hour he was in quieter water where the current was with the wind. For a while he regretted the absence, even the temporary absence, of his honored guest.

"Tell you what it is, sonny," he remarked to the choreboy. "The way that there reckless little man wanders about this tug might make some folks nervous. But not me. I know him. This here routine life ain't goin' to hurt the likes of him. Eh, well, if he was here 'stead of yarnin' with Jethro below he'd improve our minds wonderful. However, there's compensations. Reach me that there cold pork out of the bucket you brung. I got some trouble inside me and mebbe a bit of honest grub'll fix it."

Then, as he munched, Captain Salem pointed the *Midge* for Fairport light, shining dim across the tumbling waters.

It took three hours to make Fairport. Then the little tugboat slipped alongside of the pier, her towing machine taking in the slack as the barges crept in behind her. As Salem watched them he got a new slant on this routine stuff.

"Shucks," thought he. "Don't that prove it? Here we run into dirty weather and I don't so much as take a look at them two barges astern. I just know that the plowsteel hawser can't be broke an' that bargemen are too tough to kill. So I keep my eyes for the *Midge* and what little diversion there is aboard her. Yes, sir. And here she is and here them two barges is and, by tunket, here inside me are them five doughnuts still actin' dirty."

And with that he climbed out on the pier where a tall man in a raincoat was beckoning to him.

The tall man was the local manager of the Excelsior outfit.

"Bad trip?" he asked.

"Nothin' out of the ordinary," Salem answered. "Hatch come off in the blow, but we got her on again. Me, I got a pain in the stummick, and——"

"If you want shore leave you're out of luck," the manager interrupted him. The *Viking's* over at the other wharf and old Ambie, her skipper, is fired. I won't have married men and their wives using our tugboats for battlefields. You get the *Viking* for keeps, Salem, and it's glad I am to give her to you."

"And I ain't just spare captain no more?" Salem cried.

"You are not. The *Viking's* your command."

"Then I'm goin' right over and I'm goin' to set me down at the galley table and I'm goin' to eat," Salem rejoiced. "No more shore grub. No more boarding houses. From now on I eat regular and proper."

"You'll navigate first," the manager warned him. "The *Viking* is due back in Helmshaven and then she's going south to New York. I'll get another captain for this craft. You step lively."

With never a thought for his guest, that liver of a dangerous life, Mr. Willoughby Tatt, Captain Salem stepped.

Not till he was steering the big *Viking* out through the harbor entrance did he remember him.

"Now ain't that my luck," he mourned. Perhaps the fact that the doughnuts were still with him added to his sorrow. "Here I feared Jethro had skimmed the cream off'n his talk and I'd get only the skimmed milk. And now I'll likely never even see nor hear of him again. And I sure would like to know where them great open spaces is and how a man can live wholesome and dangerous."

III

TWO weeks later the *Viking* laid up alongside the *Midge* at Helmshaven.

Salem leaning out of her wheelhouse hailed Jethro Kane.

"Have you seen Mister Tatt lately?" he asked.

"He has recovered some, that same

yellow pup," Jethro Kane answered. "He ain't seasick no more, anyways."

"What are you talking about, Jethro, with your seasick yellow pup? Did I not see that same Willoughby Tatt jump out to help the lads when the big sea broke over us?"

"You seen him doin' jest what natur' told him to do," Jethro grinned. "Which was to hang over the first rail he come to an' be sick. I got the yarn from the sailors after you left so sudden to take over that mess o' junk you're pilotin' now. He got sick as a pup, and scared, too. But the sick part was stronger than the scared part o' him so he come out like I said. And ye needn't say I lie, as I see ye mean to, for after I'd yanked him out of that sea he kep' right on livin' dangerous so far as misusin' his stummick went."

"And where is he?" asked Salem.

"When last heard of he was a nervous wreck in drydock; in one o' these here sanytariums, and I'm hopin' he stays there. You ought to ha' seen my engine room after he'd lived dangerous there a spell."

"Well, anyways, he talked sensible," Salem put in pugnaciously. "This here routine life of ourn is not good for me. I don't feel right and I won't feel right. My stummick ain't able to handle my grub and I figger I got to get me some sort o' job that's lively an' dangerous and open-spaced like. I wish I knew what that Tatt meant by them open spaces. I'd sure like to go there and get fixed up proper."

"Would you?" Jethro had an intuition. "Who's cookin' aboard the *Viking* now? Course the old cap's wife, after battlin' him out of his job, wouldn't stay to cook for ye."

"Guy called Lemuel," Salem answered gruffly. "Used to cook up to Asa Bent's boardin' house. Lemuel that's known hereabouts as the he-cook."

SNAKE-BITING

by E. C.

ONE is upon dangerous ground, always, when one says that a snake will, or will not, do any certain thing. For instance, it is claimed, and disclaimed, that a snake will bite itself. I had heard this subject discussed many times before; in the *comandancia* at Playa Grande, Nicaragua, one of the boy-soldiers of the four-man garrison rushed in to me, the white man in their midst, to say that a mica snake was nesting in the *comandancia* well.

It was the dullest of several dull days of waiting for a launch to come up from Tempisque; I became as much excited as the boy. We ran down to the well at the jungle edge—a mere square pit some ten feet deep—and looked in. There, on a ledge a few inches above the water-line, was a large diamond-marked reptile. He was protected by overhanging earth from a pistol shot, so I took a machete and went hand over hand down the bucket rope until I was near enough to hack at him. A lucky stroke severed his backbone, then with a long pole I flipped him the five feet upward and out. The soldier pointed out another "mica" similarly coiled on a ledge across from me. This one, also, I disabled and tossed out.

The two reptiles were surrounded by the soldiers, who poked them with sticks and tossed bunches of grass. The snakes struck flashingly at everything moving and, while we watched, each one twisted and writhed and, in seeming blind frenzy, buried its fangs in its own body. I was curious to see if the venom would affect them, but when finally I chopped off their heads, a half-hour later, neither had seemed more agitated than snakes might be expected to, after being pretty well hacked by a blunt machete. But bite themselves viciously they did. It gave one the shivers to watch them and the boy-soldiers shrank away each time.

THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

by Eugene Cunningham

Author of "The Liar," "The Fifty-seven Immortals," etc.

OUT of the huge pines and cedars walling in the southern edge of the table-land the two riders materialized with the abruptness of a magician's trick. Root trained his binoculars upon the picturesque huddle of whitewashed, red-tiled adobes a quarter-mile to north and east in the center of the plateau. Grimly, methodically, he studied Santa Ana before lowering the glasses with an explosive grunt. He was forty, Root; square-faced, square-bodied, in khakis and Baden-Powell Stetson and laced boots. His dark mustache and imperial gave him the look of an old Dutch burgomaster from a Rembrandt canvas. By profession a mining engineer, between Texas and the Canal he had been other things.

"Looks safe enough," he said to Tommy Jackson, the lank, tow-headed Texan-at-large who had been his bosom companion for two interesting years.

"Shore—right now," Tommy nodded. "But you cain't never tell, Sam. Ugarto, he shore swings a wi-ide loop. Think we're far enough ahead o' his lancers an' the news not to be recognized an' corralled?"

"Hard to say, but we won't stay long, anyhow. Young Arturo Araya's somewhere in this region, and maybe we won't have to stop overnight, even, to get a line on his hangout. If Santa Ana gets hostile—well, we'll just have to shoot our way out! I promised Don Federico I'd carry to his son the location of that hundred thousand, then help him down Ugarto and——"

"An' Sam Root's sort o' pig-headed about keepin' promises," finished Tommy, but with affectionate admiration in his devil-may-care face.

For three days "Colonels" Root and Jackson, volunteers in the Federal Army of Tierra Rica through Root's friendship for "that nice old man," Federico Araya, the president, had fled before the lancers of General Ugarto's victorious revolutionary army. At San Benito the federals had been wiped out.

Central American wars are generally treated as comic opera, but on three bloody fields the men of Ugarto and old Araya had fought like madmen. The armies represented the two parties dividing the republic's population. Araya stood for progressive, democratic government. Ugarto—a soldier purely—regarded government as the means of rewarding the top dog; government revenues meant loot for the office holders. So the gentle, idealistic old merchant who had been for three terms president, died at San Benito a hero, a real patriot. Ugarto's success meant a long step backward for Tierra Rica. Araya had given his life in the effort to serve his country.

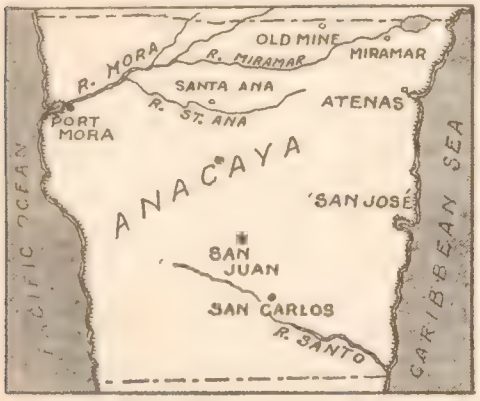
"I'd shore admire to lay hands on that Manuel Soto!" Tommy's soft drawl was deadly. "Pore old Don Federico! Hadn't been for Soto he'd be alive right now an' settin' pretty, with Ugarto in the calaboose.

*"The Good-for-Nothing," copyright, 1925, by Eugene Cunningham.

I shore tried to hand Soto a slug as he was leadin' them —— turncoats over to Ugarto!"

"Wait until we find Arturo and stage our comeback!" said Root grimly. "Wait until Chris Christensen opens his bag of tricks. Soto'll get his."

From the mountains piled on the north of the tableland, the little Rio Santa Ana foamed down and past the village. The partners had reached the ramshackle bridge



that spanned it and led into Santa Ana's drowsy main street. A grave urchin, connected by a lead rope to a big porker's hindleg, now gaped curiously at the Americans. Longest he stared at Tommy, who clung to the cowboy Stetson, the corduroys and flannel shirt, the high-heeled, square-toed boots of Texan ranges. Tommy's sun-squinted blue eyes twinkled. He held up an American dime.

"What word of Ugarto's men, *hombre?*" he asked. "Are they near Santa Ana?"

"It is said that they are now in Miravalles, señor," replied the boy. "Two days' ride to southward. They strip the country as they come. So I hide our pig."

Tommy flipped him the dime. The partners spurred on across the bridge and jogged upstreet, toward that sign upon a house front announcing an inn.

"Young Arturo Araya's the hope of Tierra Rica," Root said suddenly. "Only twenty-eight, but with American education, he appreciates the needs, the problems of these countries a lot better than the older generation ever could. These folks up here were always strong for his father. Don Federico's best soldiers came from this mountain country. Well, with a bunch of these Indians behind him and a hundred thousand in his breeches, Arturo'll have better backing than Don Federico had, even though the old man had the Trans-Coastal Steamship Company behind him."

"Yeh, but Trans-Coastal's backing Ugarto now, they say," Tommy reminded him. "This Offenburg that represents Trans-Coastal in Central America now, he didn't like Don Federico for a cent. Didn't like it when the old man wouldn't just hand him the country for the benefit o' Trans-Coastal's banana plantations."

Before Root could have answered, there came interruption. Through the door of the drinking place on their left a ragged figure spun, to sprawl in the dusty street. On his heels came a paunchy native, who dropped beside him and began to hammer the fallen one viciously. Root and Tommy Jackson had pulled up at sight of the ejected man and looked at each other.

"Well!" Tommy drawled. "If 'tain't our old *compadre*, the 'Good-for-Nothin'! I wondered whereabouts he'd sneaked off to."

"Pig!" bellowed the native bartender. "Son of a yellow she dog of the alleys! This for your ever begging! This for your thieving fingers!"

"Don't hit me!" whined the beaten one, with arms over his face and head. "Please!" He spoke in unaccented English.

Tommy merely stared indifferently. This derelict American had hung about the federal camp until a few days before the rebel attack. He had sponged from Root and Jackson, fawned upon the native soldiers, until driven off. Now, watching with growing anger this spineless cringing of a white man before a brown, suddenly Root tightened his reins and spurred his mule. The animal crossed the street in a leap, knocking over the native. Then Root leaned from the saddle. He caught the derelict by the nape of the neck and jerked him violently upright.

"You yellow pup!" Root snarled furiously. "Make me ashamed of my color! Let a native hammer you, without even trying to fight back. Git out of here!"

They watched the shambling figure vanish behind a house, then spurred forward.

"Whining beachcomber!" Root was muttering disgustedly. "Sponging drinks. Eating with the pigs at the back doors, I guess. ——! Enough to turn a man's stomach."

In the back yard of the inn they saw their animals fed, then went into a cool,

dusky room with door opening upon the house patio. The landlord promised a meal shortly, so in the rude bathroom they shaved and splashed away the dust of three days. Afterward, as they sprawled in hammocks facing the little fountain outside in the patio, from the street door came a wordless sound, midway between a whine and an apologetic cough. They turned to face the derelict, who was smiling cringingly.

"I—I wanted to thank you, Colonel Root. For saving me from a beating."

"Also, you'd like to sponge a drink," Root grunted contemptuously.

The Good-for-Nothing was even more dilapidated than he had been in the south. The hat he had removed was brimless; his sunburnt hair was tangled and long; his thin brown face was stubbed with beard; his eyes, large, deep-blue, were spiritless as a beaten dog's. The hat, with a pair of ragged cotton trousers, made his clothing.

Root felt contempt give way to something like pity. A yellow dog, he reflected, perhaps finds the hardest part of its lot in merely being such. Besides, they had never heard this poor ——'s story and so they judged him unfairly.

"Why don't you hit back when you're struck?" he snapped suddenly.

"What's the use?" the derelict countered. "Life's hard for a poor fellow like me. Every hand's against him; nobody tries to help him up from the gutter. Say, you—you couldn't give me a drink, could you? Haven't had a drop for thirty-odd hours and I'd—why, I'd crawl on my hands and knees for just the heel of a bottle!"

Root stared with practised eye, noting the knotting and unknotting of the thin hands, the involuntary twitching of the loose mouth. Root felt curious about this abject bit of human flotsam, whose age might have been anywhere between twenty-five and forty. The beard, the dirt, the half circles under red-rimmed eyes, made an unreadable mask. He wondered what was inside this scarecrow. Straw? Still, one never knew. Suddenly he clapped his hands for the landlord.

"Oh, cut the self pity!" he growled. "Life's hard for anybody who won't fight back."

The landlord padded in smilingly and Root ordered a bottle of Scotch.

The Good-for-Nothing quivered and jerked liked an epileptic as they waited for the liquor to come. He snatched the bottle from the landlord's hands, but Root wrested it from him and poured a tumblerful, then gripped both shaking hands with his own big left while he set the glass against the derelict's twitching lips. The cheap, stinging Scotch vanished in one gulp. Root gave him another tumblerful, then recorked the bottle with emphatic slap.

"Now, come here!" he commanded. "Yonder's the bath. Hike into it and scrub yourself white! Heave those pants outside and I'll bring you a decent rigout. You'd cut your throat, trying to shave, but you can slough that 'dobe shell, anyway."

MEEKLY the Good-for-Nothing disappeared into the bathroom. Presently his ragged trousers were dropped outside; there came the sound of splashing. Tommy watched in grim silence while Root dug from his big saddle-bags clean khaki trousers, with denim shirt and underwear. But when Root came back from the bathroom door Tommy was gone. He slouched in presently, and without a meeting his partner's eyes, unwrapped a pair of cheap, native made oxfords, a pair of socks and a new straw hat.

"Reckon I can stand six pesos Mex'," he mumbled. "An' I shore don't love to see a pore bum hubbin' —— thataway."

In clean clothing, with his accumulation of dirt vanished, the Good-for-Nothing was a far less abject spectacle. Root nodded toward a bench.

"Sit down. Now, what're you're doing here in Santa Ana?"

"What do I need with a compass?" countered the derelict bitterly. "One road or another; this town or the next—what difference? I have to mooch food and booze; I can't get 'em otherwise. Well, Santa Ana's just as lucky for me as any other place."

"Why the —— don't you hunt a job?" Tommy Jackson exploded. "Expect old Ma Nature to feed you with a spoon? Say, when I hear some o' you floaters make your moan, I'm fit to tie! 'Life's hard for a fella like me.' Aw, ——!"

"Well, I've no trade and as for common labor in these countries—you know how much chance I'd have; plenty of natives, and if there weren't, the whites wouldn't let me do common labor. It'd hurt their standing with the natives. Good ——! Do you

think I like it—beachcombing? Think I haven't tried to straighten up? I can't quit the booze; I can't, I tell you! I can't! It's got me!"

As on another occasion, Root's hand shot across to strip back the derelict's left shirt sleeve and reveal a blue tattooed diamond inclosing the letters "G. F. N."

"What do those stand for?" he demanded.

"None of your business!" flared the beachcomber, jerking free, with slack mouth set defiantly. "You asked me once before," he added, dropping into his usual apathetic whine. "What difference? Jackson, there, says they stand for 'Good-for-Nothing.' Well, he came nearer to the truth than he thought."

"Your meal, señores," came the landlord's voice from the patio door.

"Come on and eat, anyway!" snapped Root abruptly, not looking at Tommy.

The Good-for-Nothing slouched after them as a stray dog might have done, when they returned to the room after the meal. Root sprawled in his hammock and crammed his ancient brier. He puffed silently, thoughtfully, for a space.

"Look here," he said at last. "Jackson and I aren't reformers. But for mere pride of race we object like —— to the sight of a white man bootlicking for native scraps and heeltaps. Whether it's right or wrong, and for all the bunk you hear of world democracy and the brotherhood of man stuff, the white man stands at the top of civilization. By reason of that position he has standards to live up to. He can't cringe and whine! Now, we're willing to lend a hand to get you back on your feet. If you'll shoot square with us and stick out your chin, we'll let you trail with us; we'll pay your end until you can pay it for yourself.

"You know that Ugarto's in the saddle just now. You know that Federico Araya, the finest, whitest native this country ever produced, died at San Benito just as much a real patriot as any of those Revolutionary heroes Americans honor. Men live a while, then kick off, but ideas—they're longer lived. Ugarto and his clique of military thickheads aren't going to have things all their way! There'll be no peace here until the progressives—Araya's kind—recover power or die. I'm with the Arayas. So's Jackson. It's a fight mighty well worth making."

"You mean that Arturo Araya's to carry on his father's battle?" There was a gleam of real intelligence now in the dull, blue eyes. "But he has nothing save his personal popularity up here. Ugarto holds army, arsenal, revenues—all the machinery of government. Trans-Coastal Steamships, it's whispered, back him. The other foreigners don't care who rules as long as their interests aren't periled. They'll accept Ugarto's régime. Some may like it better, Trans-Coastal, say."

"I know all that," nodded Root. "Offenburg and Trans-Coastal bulk large in Central America; can come near seating and unseating presidents. But we'll buck 'em, anyway. And what if Arturo Araya has a big fund from military supplies; can hire an expert at handling the very latest arm of war?"

"Airplanes!" The derelict stared at Root. "But you're off about Arturo having a roll. Ugarto got everything Don Federico had; even holds the Araya estates. Arturo said only last week, after his father's death, that if he only had money he'd make a quick try at toppling Ugarto. Told a fellow here he was flat broke."

"Never mind that," Root said evasively. He half regretted saying so much.

The secret of that fund cached by Don Federico was known to him and Tommy alone; the actual hiding place to Root only. He had sworn to give it to Arturo.

"The question is," he said, "will you come with us to join Arturo and play the he-man as an American should?"

"You—you mean fight? Shooting and killing?"

When Root nodded, the derelict shrank back. His bulging eyes mirrored the starkest fear that either had ever seen. They stared, amazed to see the blood drain from his face beneath tan and stubble. At last he swallowed noisily, and his hand went flutteringly before his face, as if pushing away the proposal.

"No, no! Not—not that! Not guns! I—I can't bear the sight of blood! It drips, drips, drips— Pools on the floor, shining red— No, no! Not that!"

His trembling arm was over his eyes. Root was digging in his memory for fragments of psychology. He read the books and pondered on them. Something in this derelict's experience had marked him with this fierce aversion to weapons, blood and violence.

"Well," thought Root, "I'm no psychiatrist, anyway. Nor have I time to devote to curing mental disease. I'm a man of my hands, with plenty of work ahead."

"I—I know you want to help," mumbled the Good-for-Nothing after a space of silence. "But—I can't do it. Can't bear the sight of violence or—or blood. I—I guess I'm just plain yellow. Guess I'd better be going."

But as he got up cringingly, a servant set a cot in the patio just outside the room door. Root, slouching in his hammock, studied the derelict frowningly, while Tommy turned an expressive back upon the room.

Root was irritated. It came to him that there is nothing more appealing to the imagination of mankind than the ancient story of Cinderella in all its forms—the poor boy who becomes president; the private soldier who leaps from the ranks to command his regiment—their histories never lose fascination. In fancy, Root had seen this derelict stiffening, standing more and more erect, until he became, within and without, a man. It disappointed him, now, to watch that picture fade.

"There's the bottle," he shrugged at last. "Take your regular two fingers. That cot's for you. Sleep there tonight. As for the offer—well, we're amateurs at this helping hand stuff. Don't know anything beyond setting the proposition in plain sight. We figure that a man has to grit his own teeth and hang on. Nobody else can do it for him. So the decision's up to you."

They went out presently, leaving the Good-for-Nothing motionless on his cot. Up and down the village they wandered under the black night sky studded with yellow stars; all was peaceful. But there was tension under this quiet. In drinking place and shop alike, they were greeted with blank shrugs when they asked for information regarding young Arturo. Partly, Root thought irritably, this came from loyalty to the son of the dead president, partly from caution, since Ugarto's soldiers would soon swarm in Santa Ana, looking for Araya sympathizers. They learned nothing.

Back in the inn, they heard the Good-for-Nothing's regular breathing from his cot. In low tones, they discussed their errand fully, deciding that if by noon of the next day they had found no clue, they must head into the mountains.

"There's so much to do!" Root complained at last. "Arturo'll have to dig up the money and get to safety with it. Then we'll have to cable Chris Christensen and send him cash for a couple of planes and whatever else he needs—bombs and machine guns and ammunition and so on. The longer Ugarto's left in the saddle, the harder he'll be to dislodge. But we'll get him out, even if Offenburg does back him. That just makes the business difficult."

"Aw, to —— with Offenburg an' Trans-Coastal!" Tommy retorted cheerfully. "Can't you just see Ugarto's gang huntin' holes, after Chris has dropped a couple bombs on 'em? That's the best idee you ever had, Sam. Modern improvements!"

"Ought to open some eyes. Chris was an ace during the war, with the Canadians. Guess stunt flying at country carnivals must be pretty tame. He'll come a hopping."

TOMMY lay motionless in his hammock, trying to place the sound that had waked him. Instinctively, his hand had closed on the butt of the big frontier Colt under him. He heard Root's deep, even breathing. On Root's wrist, thrust out over hammock-edge, was a wrist watch with luminous figures. Tommy strained his eyes—half past four. He lowered bare feet to the floor and went noiselessly to the patio door. Then he heard a raucous, snuffling snore that reminded him of sleeping hogs. It came from the Good-for-Nothing.

Against the whitewashed wall the empty cot showed dimly. Tommy stooped and instantly caught the reek of *guaro*—fiery, white sugar-cane rum. Grimly he struck a match. Upon the tiled floor under his cot sprawled the Good-for-Nothing, wearing only the filthy trousers from which Root had got him the preceding afternoon. Clean clothing, new hat and shoes were gone. Before the match burned out Tommy saw an empty half-gallon can that reeked, like the derelict, of *guaro*. To Tommy, this can explained the disappearance of the clothing. Nearby lay the whisky bottle from the room—also empty.

Tommy's sudden anger was not caused entirely by the man's drunkenness. He himself was no teetotaler. But the Good-for-Nothing had doublecrossed Root. Trading the good clothing for *guaro;* even appropriating the whisky in the room, Tommy

whirled and slipped back inside. His saddle and Root's lay against the wall with their outfits, neatly piled. Tommy knew every item on either list. He investigated now with lighted match. Saddle-bags and carbines were there. Their pistols and cartridge belts they had taken to their hammocks. But the quirts were gone from each saddle-horn, like Root's plaited rawhide lariat, a treasured possession bought in Chihuahua.

Tommy descended upon the sodden figure with a rush. The cot he flung aside. He jerked the dazed ragamuffin to his feet and with one hand at the neck, the other gripping tattered trousers' seat, ran him down the passageway from patio to street and catapulted him out.

"Don't you never come back, neither!" Tommy snarled after him.

Root was awake and briefly Tommy explained. Root only grunted and rolled over. Tommy returned to his hammock and fell asleep. Both men were awakened by a *pad-pad* of feet somewhere. They sat up and found both patio and street door filled with swarthy, stolid faces. It was broad daylight, and they saw just behind the soldiers of Ugarto a well-known, hateful, yellow face, with the Good-for-Nothing's beside it. Manuel Soto—Soto the traitor of San Benito—lifted thin black brows. He regarded them with a faint curling of heavy lips.

"So!" he said softly. "Now Death closes his hand——"

One flashing glance showed their carbines gone from the saddle-boots.

"I—I couldn't help it," came the Good-for-Nothing's whine. "He made me slip in and get your guns."

It was death anyway, one way or another. They barely looked inquiringly at each other. Then both were flat on the floor. Tommy's single-action roared and a soldier whose body sheltered Soto went to the floor. Three shots, and Root's automatic jammed. Tommy flung his last bullet into the denim-clad lancers. Then a rush of the soldiers swamped them. Root had a hammered wire slug through his thigh and Soto, coming in to smile down at them, deliberately drew a Luger and aimed at Tommy's ankle.

The bullet went through just behind the bone, glanced on the tiles and stopped in a lancer's calf. He roared, but Tommy merely turned a white, deadly face upon Soto. There was a gasp from the doorway. The Good-for-Nothing, held there by two men, had fainted.

"Now, señores," smiled Soto, "you will not leave us, I think. Take them away, sergeant. One to the sugar house, the other into any dwelling you see. Post a guard over each. This fellow—" he stared for a moment at the Good-for-Nothing—"oh, bring the coward to the street."

Outside the lancers dragged the Good-for-Nothing. He was kicked back to consciousness, to look appealingly about him. An officer in immaculate khaki rode up and reined in to watch; he was a slim man of intelligent face.

"Now," grinned Soto, "release him, and when he runs let us see what marksmen you are. *Ley fuego*—the law of fire. He tries to escape."

"This man has nothing to do with the fighting!" Root cried quickly. "Cur he is, doubtless, but still is he an American. You will answer to them for this."

"That is true, Colonel Soto!" called the mounted officer. "Release him to leave the town. No! Bring him to headquarters for questioning."

Root was given a dirty pallet beside the front wall of the sugar warehouse. It was a small adobe building with street door only. Nursing his wounded leg through the day, Root watched the narrow strip of street visible through the doorway. Detachments of soldiers moved constantly up and down, their rolling gait showing that the drinking places had been raided. A sentry walking a post before the door, eyed each batch of drunken comrades enviously.

In midafternoon the sentry let pass a paunchy, middle-aged man in wrinkled linen. In the moted, golden light of the doorway Root saw a stolid red face and upturned gray mustaches.

"I am Doc-tor Schwartz," he announced in labored English. "Der General Gomez haf sent me your leg to dress."

Methodically he cleansed the wound, replacing Root's improvised bandages with clean wrappings. He turned a deaf ear to all remarks until he had finished. Then he repacked his shabby bag and regarded Root speculatively.

"Joost for demporary gomfort, der dressing. Mine skill upon you is wasted unless—der moneys of der old Araya; *if* der moneys

to der dreasury of der President Ugarto come; der law of fire upon der road to Santa Rita would be not."

Root eyed him steadily for a space.

"What money?" he asked.

The doctor shrugged calmly.

"It is told to General Gomez by der ragged American. You carry to der young Araya der secret of der hiding blace. You will der secret give?"

"What secret?" inquired Root, with blankness to match the German's.

AN HOUR later came Gomez himself—that slim officer who had spared the Good-for-Nothing. He reminded Root that he and Jackson were fighting men and as such subject to the death penalty. But, if the secret of the cache were given him the pair might go free. Gomez pledged his word and Root fancied that he would keep it, if perhaps Manuel Soto had not to be reckoned with. Gomez made no mention of *ley fuego;* he merely said that if Root refused to tell the money's hiding place, they must go to Santa Rita, the capital, in charge of Colonel Soto. Root understood this thoroughly, but still was obstinately silent.

Darkness came. There were no lights in the warehouse and none thought to light the ancient oil street lamps outside. The sentry was relieved and his successor paced the same brief post. Root lay grimly quiet, turning over half a hundred schemes. But his wounded leg and Tommy's ankle, and Tommy's delirium of which Doctor Schwartz had spoken, seemed to render them all impracticable. But still he made and rejected plans. It was not in his dogged nature to give up voluntarily. He hardly knew why he should so guard old Araya's trust; if he were killed, the secret died with him. He must do something; he must, he thought.

Cessation of the regular footfalls roused him. Outside was a murmur of voices, a shuffling of feet.

"Where does he lie?" demanded a low voice in Spanish. Root found it vaguely familiar. Soto? Gomez? Schwartz?

"You dog!" came a snarl, in reply to some objection of the sentry's. "Do you dare question a colonel of lancers?"

"Just within, he lies, *mi Coronel!*" the sentry replied fawningly. "Inside."

As some one approached the cot Root sat up painfully. Assassination of prisoners, in Tierra Rica, was a device no less popular than *ley fuego*.

"Root? It's the Good-for-Nothing!" came a hoarse whisper.

"Well!" sneered Root. "Colonel, are you? Can't stand the sight of weapons; so fearful that you doublecross us to save your skin; but when Gomez protects you, you're brave enough! Got a knife up your sleeve I suppose? Git!"

He heard the man retreat. Then came a dull thump, a sighing exhalation and a soft, dragging sound past his pallet. A sound of fumbling on the floor.

"Can you—walk a little?" came the Good-for-Nothing's strained voice. "I knocked that—sentry cold! He's tied and gagged! Come on—quick!"

Awkwardly, after a long, amazed stare through the darkness, Root stood up. A stick was pressed into his hand. Root leaned upon it and found that he could walk with its aid.

"Where's Jackson?" he wanted to know. "What's all this about?"

"Don't talk! Never mind Jackson now. We must get out of here."

The voice of Santa Ana was now a maudlin drone, lifted occasionally to an earsplitting shriek as some *guaro*-crazed soldier opened his mouth in a war whoop. Infrequently, there sounded shots. The soldiers were celebrating. The Good-for-Nothing pulled Root downstreet, toward the bridge. Root frowned. Certainly there would be a patrol there.

"Wait a minute!" his guide whispered. "Guns against the wall yonder. I'll get one."

He was back like a shadow, bringing a long Mauser rifle and woven grass bag of cartridges. Root cast away his cane and used the rifle for support. He was breathing more freely now. At least, he could put up some sort of fight. For all the tenseness of his situation, his mind turned to the figure beside him. He wondered at the motives animating the derelict. He found himself possessed of a keen distrust of him. But so long as they moved forward he thought his purpose was served by assenting quietly.

They had crept forward a dozen squares when hastily the Good-for-Nothing pressed Root against a house wall. A padding of unshod feet sounded close ahead. Out toward the street's center stepped the derelict, striking up a whistle.

"Quien es?" sounded a startled challenge, with the snap of Mauser-slings.

"El Coronel Soto!" mumbled the Good-for-Nothing, still advancing.

Root heard a dull thump like that in the sugar warehouse. Then the Good-for-Nothing was back, panting, hauling frantically at Root's sleeve. On they went, withdrawing many times into doorways to let pass knots of yelling, drunken soldiers who discharged their rifles into the sky. At last they gained the flat river-bank and saw the reflection of stars in running water.

From their right, twenty yards upstream, came the voices of a patrol on the bridge. The derelict took Root's hand and stepped into the stream. There were stepping stones here, but nearly a yard apart. Root shuffled somehow down to the first stone and the tedious, agonizing journey commenced, with Root leaning heavily upon the other's shoulder and crawfishing from stone to stone. On the farther bank Root collapsed utterly. He was a heavy man and he knew what it cost the flabby derelict to haul him to his back and stagger up the road. The man's sobbing breathing sounded startlingly loud. Root wanted to insist upon being put down to walk, but his leg throbbed in successive flashes like hammer blows upon a boil; it required all his self-control to keep from groaning.

At last he was eased to the ground behind a clump of cactus. The Good-for-Nothing dropped beside him and minutes passed. Then he stood up, gasping.

"I'll—be back—if I can," he wheezed. "Guess you're—safe."

Time passed. Gradually the agony in Root's leg decreased until he could think of something else. His first thought was of Tommy. All his keen distrust of the Good-for-Nothing returned in a rush. Something queer was up. But that made no difference; what mattered was that he had left Tommy in the town. Upon hands and knees, dragging his wounded leg stiffly after him, he inched toward the river. He hardly knew what he intended to do—find an animal of some sort, perhaps. But it began to be certain that either both of them would escape from Santa Ana, or the town would hold them both forever.

He had gained perhaps twenty yards in a dizzy, nightmare journey that seemed to occupy hours, when slow hoof beats from ahead roused him. He tried to stand and fell sprawling; tried again and this time hauled up with the rifle. Then he managed to stand without leaning on the gun. He was going to get that animal. Now the beast loomed dimly gigantic against the stars. Some native sneaking out of Santa Ana with his possessions, Root thought. He gritted his teeth and waited.

"Root!" It was a low hail. "Root?"

He answered, then rocked dizzily. An arm went around him as he swayed.

"Here! Take a drink, man! Jackson's here, on the mule. I'll help you up behind him. You'll have to hold him. He's out."

WITH dawn commenced a day of horror. The sun shot up, a molten ball, and soon the scrub jungle of the foothills danced in the heat-haze. It was furnace-hot in the tangled depths through which the silent ragamuffin piloted the mule, for the trees were so low that they gave no shelter from the sun. Root's arms ached with the strain of Tommy's sagging weight. His leg was swollen and throbbing; his head spun nauseatingly. At intervals Tommy recovered consciousness in a delirium that peopled the jungle with enemies. He shouted and struck tremendous blows on empty air until even Root's thick arms were taxed to hold the muscular, raging figure in the saddle.

Always the Good-for-Nothing slouched steadily forward. Noon passed and Root had hardly seen his face. Somewhere, he got a cartridge-belt and brace of Luger automatics. Upon his feet were untanned cowhide sandals. These, with ruined straw hat and tattered trousers, made his only clothing. The fierce sun cooked his naked trunk to cherry-red. Mosquitoes were everywhere; whining, stinging legions; he walked waving a rag before him. The *guaro* gourd hung to the saddle; but if the Good-for-Nothing drank, it was not from that gourd. He lurched on.

At last, following the faint trail upward toward misty northern peaks, they reached a deserted hut before a ragged plantain patch. It was greener country; there was a tiny stream here, spring fed. When he had been helped from the weary mule, Root crawled like a hurt animal to the water and buried his face. The Good-for-Nothing drank, then rebandaged both their wounds. Tommy, lying under the half ruined roof, he tended specially, keeping a dripping rag

upon the burning forehead. But always his eyes seemed to look through his surroundings; his face was preoccupied. Leathery tortillas and soggy black beans and rice were in the saddle-bags. They ate without a word, then Root fell instantly asleep.

When he waked it was yet dark, but upon the eastern clouds was a faint, rose flush; to the north a volcano was outlined in regal purple, a tall, truncated cone. For a moment this was all, then with a magnificent rush the flaming rim of the sun shot above the piled mountains and the colors of the sky deepened and paled and changed in a welter of writhing tints that embraced the spectrum, merging at last in a solid sheet of orange that spread all across the canopy. The brazen day had come again.

Root watched absently. Had the Good-for-Nothing undergone some magical regeneration back there in Santa Ana? Root found nothing impossible in the theory of itself. He had seen a drunkard throw the bottle out of window and never touch alcohol afterward; an inveterate smoker lay aside his pipe forever; a timid man—still frightened—make himself fight like a demon. He prided himself that he was a mightily efficient man of his hands, but he conceded that in the derelict's place he would have been lucky to do so much as the other had done. Why should he now distrust the plain explanation that was offered him? He wondered.

The Good-for-Nothing led the mule around the hut. Root spoke to him, but the derelict's face was haggard and still preoccupied. He only grunted:

"Time to move. Undoubtedly we're being followed. Jackson awake?"

"Yeh," Tommy answered for himself. "Kind o' light-headed, but I shore could cannibalize a square meal, fella!"

"Eat as we go. Can't stop now."

The march was much as on the preceding day, but it was far cooler among the pines and cedars at this higher altitude. Little streams were everywhere. Also, the inflammation of their wounds was much reduced. Their guide passed up a bundle of *puros*, the rough-rolled little cigars of the country. The riders ate, then smoked, as the mule followed the silent, grim-faced figure. Steadily the trail climbed. When they halted at noon it was in a grassy park through which a mountain brook ran in silver leaps.

"Camp here until dark," grunted the Good-for-Nothing. "Couple of villages ahead; we'll try to get past them in the darkness. You see, we came by winding back trails; main trail to the northern frontier's shorter. Lancers may have gotten ahead and be waiting somewhere."

Root had told Tommy what he knew of their rescue. Though he had said nothing of any suspicion, Tommy had gathered much from his partner's manner. Now the lanky puncher eyed their savior narrowly through the smoke of his *puro*.

"How come Soto never shot me?" he asked abruptly. "I recollect he come in, that evenin' in Santa Ana, a-grinnin' like a old yaller tomcat with a crippled sparrow. We had some words an' I lit into him. He jerked his gats an' said he'd shoot when he counted ten—slow. He begun to count, then he begun to swell an' swell till it seemed like he plumb filled the place. That's all I remember."

"I killed him," was the calm reply. "Don't know if he'd have shot you, but when I burst in he fired once at me. I grappled him; managed to get his Luger muzzle against his chest. He pulled the trigger in the scuffle. Then I packed you out to the mule I'd stolen. These are Soto's Lugers I'm wearing. I got a couple of hundreds in American gold from his pocket, too."

There followed a moment of uncomfortable silence that seemed endless to Tommy and Root. Tommy, to cover it, reached over for the *guaro* gourd and took a small drink. The Good-for-Nothing saw and his face worked strangely for an instant, then hardened. He got up and hurried off into the pines. They looked at each other, knowing that they had not said the thanks they should have given.

"Young Arturo Araya's somewhere ahead," remarked the Good-for-Nothing, coming back with calm face. "I'll find out just where. Then you can tell him, Root, where to find the money. When your friend Christensen brings down a bombing plane—you know, I—I listened at your door, that night—he'll hand Ugarto a surprize. By the way," he added carelessly, "suppose something should happen to you before you meet Arturo. How could he ever find the money? Don't you think it'd be a good idea to tell Jackson and—and me,

if you like, so one of us would be sure to get through with the message?"

So, thought Root, as calmly he met the other's eyes, the mystery was out! This "rescue" was merely a bit of cat-and-mouse play: Soto, Gomez, employed the Good-for-Nothing. He "saved" the doomed prisoners, thinking that Root, in simple gratitude, would accept him as trustworthy; let slip the cache's location. If the plan failed, then the derelict had only to lead his helpless charges into the hands of waiting lancers who, undoubtedly, were waiting somewhere ahead. Soto dead? Hardly! Root thought sardonically. He doubted, even, if those sentries had been knocked out. But his well-trained face told nothing of his thoughts.

"That is an idea," he nodded gravely. "Well, lots of time to consider."

Sight of the long Mauser rifle and its cartridges was comforting. They were not wholly defenseless. Perhaps he might even get one of the Lugers, without rousing suspicion. Quite cheerfully, at dusk, he mounted the mule.

The Good-for-Nothing seemed to know his way perfectly. He led them over tortuous trails that edged sometimes around the shoulders of towering hills where Root, staring downward past his feet, sensed black gulfs. Root's wrist watch had been appropriated by a soldier, but he felt that it was past midnight when the mule was led out from the trail and halted behind the dim bulk of a cabin.

"Be still!" whispered the Good-for-Nothing. "I hear horses out yonder!"

Soundlessly he disappeared. Now Root and Tommy also detected approaching riders. From within the hut came a faint murmur of voices. Then horses were halted in the trail before the cabin and some one shouted for the people of the place to make a light. For answer came a shrill, fierce cry—

"*Viva* Araya! Death to Ugarto! Fire, soldiers!"

A burst of shots sounded. Root stiffened. For the heavy, ragged roar of native rifles had been preceded, was accompanied now, by the staccato cracking of automatic pistols. There was the thunder of pounding hoofs, loud in the trail; the firing moved farther and farther away. Suddenly Root threw open his Mauser-chamber. The rifle was empty. He dug into the cartridge-bag and jerked out a shell. It did not fit the rifle. None of the shells in the bag were of the rifle's caliber. So that was why he had been permitted to carry them!

A shadow moved at the mule's head, turning the animal straight up the hillside behind the hut. Root's cold question was answered by an irritable grunt. After what seemed hours, Root saw ahead the ghostly bulk of a whitewashed building. Before it the mule was halted and they were helped down and inside to pallets of cornstalks.

Sunlight in his face waked Root. As he sat up, Tommy opened his eyes also. They lay in an empty room with whitewashed walls, with a single window through which now came a flood of yellow sunlight. Root limped over to the door. There was a flat yard, the house on one side of it; two sides seemed to end at a cliff edge, while from the fourth a narrow trail, much overgrown, led along a narrow ridge to westward. Two hundred yards downtrail was a black shaft mouth.

"Old mine, I'd say," grunted Root, coming back to Tommy. "Wonder where he is?"

"'Twasn't him brought us here last night," Tommy said thoughtfully. "No, 'twasn't, Sam! Not if my nose is still workin'. I know that native smell an' 'twas a native steered the mule."

This further complicated Root's tangled thoughts. Suddenly he was worried. Had that poor —— been a square-shooter after all? Had he been telling the truth all along, helping them to safety, only to be killed by Ugarto's men?

With the sound of hoofs outside, Root hobbled again to the door. In the yard two riders were swinging down from little tiger-striped mules. One was a squat, grizzled Indian, but his companion was a slender white man in clean yellow linen and fine panama, with native style puttees—all brand new. He came quickly forward, smiling, with hand out. Root could only gape. For the Good-for-Nothing's lean, brown face—somewhat haggard, still—was clean shaven and firm lined. The shadows were going from beneath his eyes, which were clear blue, level and, just now, twinkling.

"How are the casualties?" he asked, and the voice was self-sure, Root thought. "Did our shooting, last night, worry you? Typical native battle: Couple of hundred

rounds fired and never a hit! I'm no pistol shot and Ugarto's boys couldn't hit a barn. Guess they thought from my wild yells that they'd found a young army. Anyway, they turned tail and hiked a few shots. I chased 'em a way, to sort of harden their decision to emigrate."

"Do you mind explaining a little?" Root said slowly. "I don't seem to—to just get all this."

"You've an explanation coming, all right." Abruptly the other turned serious. "Juan, here—he was my servant when first I hit Tierra Rica, four years ago—will rustle some breakfast. Meanwhile we'll talk. Let's go in."

Inside, Tommy eyed him narrowly for a moment, then smiled widely.

"Sit down," said their host. "Now, to begin, don't think that I've been in disguise, or anything like that." He shrugged uncomfortably. "I was exactly what you thought me—a spineless beachcomber. In Soto's headquarters I was scared stiff; spilled everything I knew, trying to get off. Told how you had the secret of Don Federico's cache, Root. Would have told about Christensen, but they didn't give me time.

"Soto threatened that if I didn't get the location of the money, he'd make me shoot you both. Then I'd be shot as your murderer. Neat. Knowing that I hadn't a chance to get your secret, I—oh, I groveled before that grinning ——. Let out my horror of blood. So he had a couple of men hold me, while another cut my arm. I promptly fainted. They kicked me out of it. Over and over we had the maneuver. Finally, I stopped fainting and just watched them quietly!

"I can't give you any Latin names for it, but Soto's torture defeated its own end. More! It cured me of my pet horror. Understand, it wasn't pain, or the fear of pain, that got me. It was the sight of dripping blood, reminding me of—of a certain night in San Francisco. But as I was made to watch my own bleeding, it came to me suddenly that my weakness was silly. I was cured!"

"I've read of that," nodded Root. "Cured by facing your aversion."

"It was like—like being reborn. In every way. I thought of things forgotten all too long. Soto had no idea. For I began to play a part. Played it well, too. Promised to get your secret. Then I started to get you fellows off; it was first step of the comeback I was going to make. You know the rest."

"How come you was so scared o' just blood?" Tommy asked curiously.

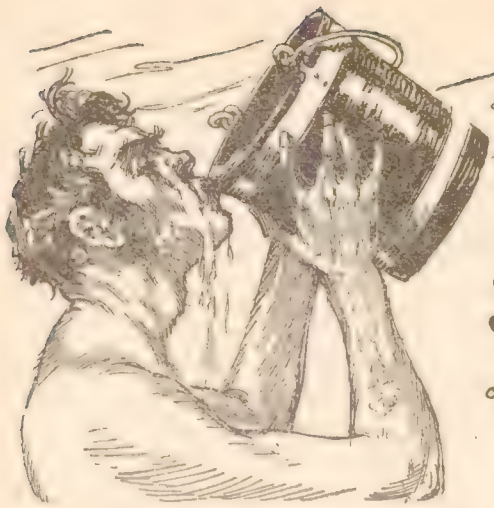
"Well—" he faced them steadily now—"in college I was a rich young waster. Just before I was due to graduate from the University of California, I gave a party to a gang of my own sort. Lots to drink. In a drunken argument I fired a pistol point-blank at a fellow. The bullet only grazed his temple, but he hung across the table dripping blood, while I stared horrified. It was awful! I was sure I'd killed him, so I ran away. For three years I thought myself a hunted murderer. Down here my money went and I sank lower and lower. Even when I learned accidentally that I wasn't wanted, I was too far gone with booze to care a lot. Too, I had a little shame left; I wouldn't go sneaking back."

"In Santa Ana we asked you to come in with us and help down Ugarto," Root reminded him. "If you want to join, I—we—we'd surely like to have you."

"That reminds me!" He smiled quickly at them. "Juan sent his nephew up to Arturo Araya's hiding place with a message telling Arturo to meet you here. I don't think there's an Ugarto man north of Santa Ana. I went into Ermita, the village over yonder, to get cleaned up, and nobody had heard of any soldiers.

"About helping Arturo, I'm with you, all the way. He was my classmate in the U. of C. He's one fine scout; valedictorian and all that. But you've been talking a good deal about Offenburg, Trans-Coastal's representative down here, backing Ugarto." He faced Root twinklingly.

"I'm with you, Root, but I'm leaving Juan here to tend you, while I hike for San Francisco. Today. Oh, I'll do my share of the war, but it'll be up there. Ever hear of old Gordon F. North? Great old fellow; lonesome, though, he must be, with never a one of his own blood near him. You know that in addition to some other things, he is the Trans-Coastal Steamship Company. Well, I think he'll let the crown prince of the House of North tie a can to Offenburg, and help the best man win. He was mighty fond of old Don Federico, my dad was."



IN THE STOKEHOLE

by W Townend

Author of "Peter the Greek," "Ironfist," etc.

EIGHT BELLS struck in the engine room as "Dogfish" Skedge, "Darkie" Durham, and nineteen-year-old Micky Sefter, the three men on the chief engineer's watch, clattered down the ladder into the stokehole. The three men on the second's watch whom they had come to relieve made noisy preparations for departure, and one of them, old "Jud" Gantern, shouted at Micky in mock anger.

"About time, too!" said old Jud. "Come on down and do some work, you Micky, for 'eaven's sake."

"Yes," retorted Micky Sefter. He had a boy's smooth face and the eyes of a man who has seen more of the world than is good for his soul. "What you mean is, come on an' do some of the work you fellers ought to have done and didn't."

Old Jud cackled with pleased laughter. The airy badinage chimed in with his holiday mood.

"You talk, Micky, lad, don't yer! Like a pitcher book. You listen to me. If you three stiffs was to work 'arf as 'ard as what yer should, you wouldn't have no time to set smokin' yer pipes two hours out of the four."

Dogfish Skedge, as usual, was in a bad temper, and put an abrupt end to this exchange of pleasantries.

"You, Jud, get on out of it, d'jer 'ear?"

The old man wiped his dirty white mustache with the back of his coal-grimed hand and smiled weakly and propitiatingly.

"We're only jokin' like, Dogfish."

Dogfish took a sudden menacing step forward, and old Jud began to climb the ladder quickly.

"What's more," said Dogfish with austerity, "if I find you ain't drawn that fire of mine proper, I'll give you a wipe on the jaw, you old frog, that'll keep you warm for a week."

"There now, Dogfish." It was Chadstone, the third man on the second engineer's watch, who spoke. "There now, Dogfish," said Chadstone soothingly, "everything's all right, o' chap, everything's all right. You don't want to——"

Dogfish snarled out of the corner of his wide mouth.

"You mind I don't show yer everything's all wrong. Get on out of 'ere, Chadstone, or I'll help yer with my boot."

Chadstone hurried up the ladder, and there was calm in the stokehole.

"Well, fellers—" Darkie Durham picked up the heavy slice-bar—"suppose we might as well start."

Dogfish frowned. To him, as to the other men in the forecastle, sailors and firemen alike, Darkie Durham was a mystery. A silent, sober man who made no friends. No one had ever learned his age or where he came from or what his history had been in the past, or what his thoughts were.

His shaven face was pale and shrewd and wizened; there was no mirth in his tight-lipped smile; and the expression in his

dark eyes, set too close together in his head, was, as a rule, cold and hostile. He was quick and efficient in his work, but, save for his width of shoulder, he was slight in build, neither tall nor short, and lean almost to the point of emaciation. He did not drink, he did not swear, he was seldom ashore in foreign ports. Also he saved his money. Yet with all these disadvantages, he was not unpopular. The one man on board who actually disliked him was Dogfish Skedge who saw in him, for all his quiet, inoffensive ways, a menace to his own power.

So now, as Darkie began his work, Dogfish frowned and wondered as he had wondered many times before how it was that he had never forced a quarrel on him and thrashed him as he had thrashed other men, bigger and more dangerous. A little shudder ran through him. Quite suddenly he knew that he hated Darkie Durham.

Dogfish turned with a grunt and surveyed the gage between the center boiler which was his and the starboard boiler which was Darkie's. Then he closed the forced draft checks on the No. 5 furnace, swung open the door, and swore.

What the —— was old Jud playing at? Leaving a fire that way! The old fool ought to be knocked on the head! All the same, it would last a while longer without more coal, anyway!

Dogfish slammed the door, opened the forced draft checks and passed on to the low No. 8 furnace. Again he cursed old Jud. Again he closed the door without putting on more coal. Then he opened the door of the No. 2 furnace which had been allowed to burn down and because this time he could find no fault with old Jud he swore again and taking up the slice thrust its point into the heart of the clinker.

He was a thick-set, large-boned man, Dogfish; lean, muscular and bandy-legged, enormously proud of his strength and his depth of chest and his huge, hairy arms. As he worked he made animal-like noises in his throat, as if the clinker he was breaking were an enemy he despised and loathed, like Darkie. The illusion of enmity was intensified by the ferocity in his large, moist, pale eyes, and his thick, snarling lips under the stubby brown mustache, and the wide, puffed out nostrils of his flattened nose.

"—— yer! Come on out of it!"

He jerked the slice up and down fiercely. The perspiration was already trickling in streams down his sallow face, making little paths in the coal dust from his temples over his flat, heavy cheeks to the folds of his unshaven chin.

"Never knew clinker like this 'ere!" he said. "Never!"

And then he saw, or thought he saw, Darkie Durham glance in his direction and smile, and he stopped working to scowl angrily. But Darkie apparently had not been looking at him. He was giving all his attention to the No. 7 furnace, the low furnace in the starboard boiler, raking out great masses of golden clinker on the stokehole floor.

DOGFISH plunged his slice once more into the No. 2 furnace, and for some minutes he worked hard. And as he worked he brooded.

Darkie! He'd have to smash him, same as he'd smash the clinker! Him and his sneaking ways and his quiet smile and his disrespect to his betters!

One thing, Darkie was scared of him! Dogfish comforted himself with the thought, but deep down in him an imp mocked and told him it was a lie.

Still at the No. 7 furnace that had been burnt down for him, Darkie flung shovels of coal on to the fire, the yellow glare casting a light on his lean face and the muscles of his bare arms. He slammed the furnace door shut, opened the forced draft checks and drew a bucket of sea water from the tap at the bulkhead. He poured the water on to the mound of red hot clinkers on the plates. The steam shot up toward the dark gratings overhead with a fierce hissing.

Dogfish scoffed inwardly. Darkie was no good. His work was rotten! No system; not what he called system, anyway! Why, ——! He'd have his furnace cleaned and steam up to the mark long before Darkie, any day!

Micky Sefter, who had the port boiler, and would clean the No. 3 furnace which had not been drawn by the second engineer's watch, began to whistle cheerfully.

"Stop that —— noise!" said Dogfish. "D'jer 'ear me!"

The boy glanced at him sidewise, and flung coal on to the fire.

Presently, forgetting, he began to whistle again.

Dogfish continued to put coal on his fire. Then, suddenly stooping, he picked up a lump of coal, the size of his clenched fist, and threw it at the boy.

The coal struck Micky on the cheek, and with a sharp cry of pain he staggered back against the bulkhead. He put his hand to his face and felt blood, warm and sticky. He stared at the scarlet on his blackened fingers and then raised his eyes and looked at Dogfish.

Dogfish surveyed him coldly.

"Another time," he said, "don't you whistle when I tell yer not to!"

He drove his shovel under a pile of coal on the plates. As he straightened his back and turned he saw that Darkie was smiling. This time there was no mistake. He thrilled with anger.

"Want anything?" he demanded.

"No," said Darkie politely.

"Keep yer —— smiles to yerself when I'm around, then! Understand?"

But he felt that what he had actually said was feeble in comparison with what he had meant to say. And why was that? He wrinkled his forehead in thought. He did not know. He felt confused and troubled.

Darkie had not argued with him. He shut the forced draft checks on the No. 4 fire, threw open the door, protecting his left hand with his greasy cap, and used his slice. He shut the door and opened the checks. He did the same at the No. 1 fire. Again he went to the tap and drew water to drench the clinkers.

He took the rake to his three furnaces and worked left handed, his cap on his right hand, his features set in a frown. He opened the No. 1 fire, threw on three shovels of coal, ducking his head to avoid the blow back of flame. On the No. 7 fire which he had cleaned he threw nine shovels, on the No. 4, six.

As if under a spell, Dogfish watched him, despising his methods. Then he turned once more to his own work and dragged a white-hot, incandescent mass of clinker and ash on to the glowing pile in front of the boiler.

He spoke over his shoulder:

"You, Micky, fetch me some water!"

"Won't!" said the boy. "Fetch it yourself!"

His cheek still ached. Better have finished with Dogfish now as go dragging on like he had done day after day, not calling his soul his own!

"What's that?" said Dogfish.

"Fetch yer —— water yourself!" said Micky sullenly.

Dogfish was shocked.

"Well, by ——!" he said. "You're askin' for it, ain't yer?"

He drew the water for himself. As he drenched the clinker and the steam hid everything before his eyes he heard a laugh. He turned furiously on Micky.

"You laughed! All right!"

"I never laughed!" said the boy. "You leave me alone, Dogfish!"

Then if it wasn't Micky who had laughed, it must be Darkie. But Darkie was staring at the gage between the two boilers. Dogfish was chilled by the grim earnestness of his expression.

Again what he had intended to say faded from his mind.

Micky picked up the empty drinking water bucket and climbed the ladder. Darkie stood under the starboard ventilator, his arms folded across his chest.

"You're 'avin' a —— easy time tonight!" said Dogfish. He was hot; the skin of his face burnt; his throat was parched.

Darkie who looked cool in comparison nodded his head.

"Always is easy when the crossbunker's trimmin' herself! Three of us firin', no one trimmin'! O' course it's easy!"

"It's easy if you don't do your work right," said Dogfish sulkily. "Thought even you would 'ave known that."

"I do know it!" said Darkie

He took his rake and went to the No. 1 furnace.

Until Micky Sefter came down the ladder, carrying the bucket of drinking water, neither of the two men spoke.

"What's it like on deck, Micky?" said Darkie.

"Blowin' up a bit!" said the boy. "An' dark as blazes!"

Dogfish beckoned.

"Here, gimme a drink!"

Micky glanced at him. Dogfish's bullying tone, his scowl, his large greedy eyes, angered him. He held out the bucket to Darkie.

"Here, Darkie."

Darkie smiled and drank.

"Thank yer!" he said. He handed the bucket back and went on with his work.

The boy drank, watching Dogfish cautiously the while, knowing the punishment that must follow.

Dogfish roused himself.

"'Ere!" he said. "What the —— do yer mean! I asked yer for a drink, didn't I!"

"Well," said the boy, "what's stoppin' you?"

Dogfish snatched at the bucket with his left hand and with his right struck him on the side of the head.

"That'll teach yer to play the fool with me, you cub! D'yer want some more?"

Micky dug his teeth into his lower lip and blinked.

"Go back to yer job!" growled Dogfish.

Dogfish finished drinking and set the bucket down on one of the valve boxes against the bulkhead.

Darkie was working at the No. 4 furnace. Dogfish felt a sudden urge to assert himself, to show Darkie he was his master.

"You wanter get them coals spread out more even!" he said sourly. "That ain't no fire."

Darkie glanced at him.

"Ain't it! Dare say I could learn from you, Dogfish, couldn't I?" He nodded toward the gage between the two boilers. "Mine's a hundred an' eighty! What's yours?"

The pointer on the dial of the center boiler stood at 171. Dogfish could scarcely believe it. Anger choked him.

"Do yer think I'm a better worker than you?" said Darkie.

Dogfish found it difficult to breathe. A better worker than him! The man was a fool. There wasn't a better worker than him aboard the ship! What was more, he'd show him!

But as he threw shovels of coal into the furnaces, with swift easy movements of back and arms, he brooded in deep gloom. Was he afraid of Darkie! Why were his hands shaking so that he could scarcely hold his shovel?

TIME passed slowly.

"How's the steam, Dogfish?" said Darkie. "Gettin' up, eh?"

Dogfish quivered and made no reply. There was, he felt, something in Darkie that was hid. That was the trouble. That was what bothered a feller. He seemed meek, but he wasn't meek!

And then the increased rolling of the vessel and his own strange weakness made Dogfish commit the unpardonable sin. The blade of his shovel hit against the lip of the furnace and full half of the coal fell in a black shower on to the plates.

He swore and glanced quickly around. Darkie who was cleaning the ash pit of the No. 7 furnace smiled at him.

"Better luck next time, Dogfish!"

"Never seen accidents happen to no one before?" snarled Dogfish.

"Sure!" said Darkie. "Happenin' to me right along! I ain't a scientific worker like you, Dogfish. I don't perfess to be."

Old Jud Gantern and Chadstone came down the ladder, carrying pails, bound for the engine room for hot condenser water to wash in.

"How you makin' out, Darkie?" said old Jud. "Showin' 'em how to do it, eh?"

A chuckle in the darkness encouraged him to continue.

"Gosh! you're a strong li'l ——, Darkie!" he went on. "Was that you spilt them coals just now?"

Dogfish, listening, as he turned over the fire, glared at the two men. What the —— was the old fool talking about now! Was every one going crazy? He'd clear the forecastle before another day had gone! Sure as fate! Smash the whole —— crowd of them, Darkie too, —— him!

He waited till Jud and Chadstone had come back from the engine room with their buckets of water and had climbed the ladder.

"You ain't so strong, Darkie!" he said.

"No," said Darkie in his meek way. "Men in my line don't have to be. I ain't so strong, but I'm not slow, thank ——!"

"Slow!" Dogfish did not know what to say. He wanted to punch Darkie's jaw. He would too, by gor! Then he gulped and hesitated. An inner voice seemed to be talking to him, warning him as he valued his peace of mind and his happines to be careful.

He bent and peered into the No. 8 furnace, flung on some coal, slammed the door, opened the forced draft checks, and wiped his face with his sweat rag.

He glanced at Micky Sefter in time to see him turn away with a sneer.

"Want another smack on the ear!" he said sharply. "Do yer?"

"No thank yer, Dogfish!" said the boy.

"No thank yer! Blah!" Dogfish scoffed.

"Talks pretty, don't 'e! You, Micky, you'd better mind out! I ain't 'ad time to spare on yer lately, but wait till I start in proper again, to show yer what's what an' 'oo's 'oo! What you need is another evenin' ashore, seein' the sights!"

Micky shuddered.

"I wouldn't go ashore with you, Dogfish," he said sturdily, "not for all the money in the world!"

Dogfish shouted.

"Haw! haw! 'Ark at 'im! What about the lady with the yaller hair who called you 'er little blue-eyed darlin'!" His mood changed. "You mis'rable little pup! I'll get you so drunk again you won't know whether you're a stuffed alligator or only a bloomin' jumpin' caterpillar!"

"It'll take more'n you to make me drunk!" said the boy.

"I'm boss of the fo'csle an' don't you forget it!" said Dogfish. "I can make yer do any —— thing I like! There's no one could stop me, if I didn't want to. Your own fat-'eaded mother couldn't. So far's that goes, I'd make her loop the loop same as I'll make you!"

Micky stared with misty eyes into the red glare of the fire he was raking.

Dogfish was roaring with laughter.

"Yes, my lad! You wait! Another year from now you'll be seasoned! You'll be the same as the rest of us down 'ere! Won't 'e, Darkie!"

"If he's like you, Dogfish, —— help him!" said Darkie.

Dogfish was awed into silence. Darkie had dared to speak to him as no one had ever spoken to him before!

"What do you mean by that, just?" he said presently.

"You've been sayin' things I don't care for, that's what!" said Darkie mildly. "There's things yer can say, things yer can't. D'yer understand?"

Dogfish licked his coarse lips, swallowed, and passed his hands across his damp forehead. Darkie's answer had puzzled him.

"Seems to me you're askin' for trouble, Darkie!"

"Trouble!" said Darkie. "Well, that's all right! Any time you like, Dogfish."

He opened a furnace door and began to fling in coal.

Again that inner voice seemed to warn Dogfish. He paused irresolutely.

"I wouldn't want to fight a man smaller'n myself!" he said at length.

"Oh, no!" said Darkie. "O' course not! You'd have fought the kid here, though, wouldn't yer! Smashed him up without givin' a second thought to it. You listen to good advice, Dogfish! Say what yer like about me an' other fellers but leave mothers out of it. Understand?"

"What do you know about mothers, eh?" Dogfish threw back his great head and roared. "Haw! Haw! Haw! Nice kind of a mother you must have 'ad, Darkie, to bring you into the world. Trot 'er out some time an' let's have a look at 'er! What's the the old gal drink?"

Dogfish stopped suddenly. Darkie's face was stern under the coal dust. His eyes were hard and narrow.

"Dogfish," he said quietly, "if you think I'm goin' to have you talk about my mother the same as she was one of those fla h pick-ups o' yours, you're mistaken. Drop it, or you'll find things ain't as safe an' as happy aboard this packet as you thought they was."

He turned once more to his furnaces.

And so Darkie Durham had a mother, had he? That was news, anyway. And he got angry if she was made fun of! Oh, did he?

And all of a sudden Dogfish lost all interest in Darkie's mother. He felt limp and tired, as if some one had beaten him in a fight. Even the rake that he was using seemed too heavy for him! Was he losing his strength, or what? And because he was afraid he told himself that he would give Darkie Durham the soundest thrashing ever a man had!

But would he? Something at the back of his mind gnawed like the nerve of an aching tooth. Suppose Darkie was one of those fighting men, a real tip-top scrapper, one of those —— quiet fellers who didn't talk but just bided their time and then sailed in and fought! Suppose that they fought and Darkie whipped him! ——! Dogfish shivered. He was scared, yet he knew that if life were to be worth living, he must fight!

THE little fourth engineer came into the stokehole and stood for a while watching the three firemen. He opened the No. 1 furnace and nodded.

"That's good, Durham! Fine!"

Then strolling toward the center boiler he glanced at the gages.

"Hullo!" he said. "What's the matter, Skedge?"

"Nothin's the matter!" said Dogfish sullenly.

The fourth gave him a sharp look.

"What about your steam? It's going back on you, Skedge! What's come to you tonight, eh?"

Darkie uttered a short laugh and slammed the door of the No. 7 furnace shut.

"Fac' of the matter is, sir, Dogfish here ain't so young as he used to be. He's kind uh findin' his legs goin' back on him."

The fourth engineer who was young and suspicious of firemen and their ways looked from Darkie to Dogfish and smiled uneasily.

"Well, that's all right, but you keep your steam up, Skedge! See?"

As soon as he had gone back to the engine room, Dogfish advanced toward Darkie. Darkie raised his shovel off the ground, level with his thighs and waited.

"You talk to engineers about me," said Dogfish wildly, "an' by ——! I'll smash yer so you don't talk to no one never again!"

"You won't get rid of me so easy as that!" said Darkie.

Dogfish subsided, muttering threats under his breath. Things had gone far enough. He wasn't going to stand much more of it, he wasn't!

And then Micky who had been listening with a delighted grin said:

"Well, fellers, what about ashes?"

"Right!" said Darkie. "That is, if Dogfish can spare the time from tryin' to keep them fires o' his from goin' out, o' course! P'r'aps he can! Mebbe he can't! I'll go into the engine room, anyway, an' get 'em to put the steam on!"

Dogfish wondered dully what had come to him. Darkie was laughing at him. From smiling at him he had passed to laughing. ——! Laughing at him, who'd had the forecastle under his thumb ever since they'd signed on for the voyage!

He opened a furnace door and drove his slice into the caking clinker.

Darkie returned to the stokehole.

"Quarter after nine! Get along up, you two! Dogfish, don't you go asleep this time in the 'tween decks, neither!"

Dogfish began to climb the ladder after Micky. Half way toward the grating he remembered what he had intended saying.

"You wait!" he said hoarsely. "If you knew what was comin' to you, Darkie, you wouldn't be so pleased wi' yerself!"

When he reached the 'tween decks, his head was throbbing. He was sick and dizzy. He stood on the grating by the opening in the ventilator shaft through which the big ash buckets would come to him.

Why was Darkie so sure of himself? Why had he dared say what he had said? Because he was a scrapper, of course! The reason was clear. A scrapper afraid of nothing!

A hollow sounding shout came through the ventilator from the stokehole far below.

"A' right! Go ahead now!"

Dogfish knew that Darkie had filled the first bucket.

Micky Sefter standing on the grating above started the ash hoist engine.

The wire rope was wound slowly up. The bucket appeared in the opening in the ventilator.

Dogfish called—

"Right! I got 'er!"

He drew the heavy iron bucket full of ashes toward him, rested it on the edge of the ventilator and unhooked it; then seizing it in both hands, grunting at the weight, he lifted it on to the sill of the door that led to the 'tween decks, balanced it against his right thigh and hooked the empty bucket on to the wire rope.

"Go ahead!" he shouted.

Micky reversed the engine and the bucket began to descend. Dogfish lifted the full bucket of ashes on to the iron floor of the 'tween decks and, his hands gripping the rim, shoved it before him toward the side of the ship. He lifted the bucket once more and tipped it upside down into the ash shute. He went back to the grating with the empty bucket.

Again he heard the voice of Darkie down below—

"Go ahead now!"

Again the full bucket appeared in the opening of the ventilator.

"Right!" growled Dogfish. "Got 'er!"

And as he worked, taking the full buckets off the hooks, hooking on the empties, dumping the ashes through the shute, he pictured Darkie in the stokehole down below, grinning, and he shivered.

He was being laughed at. Laughed at! By a miserable, mealy-mouthed, pale-faced, pious pup like Darkie Durham. Him and his talk of mothers. He'd have to fight him, he would, and lick him. That very night!

And again the fear flashed into his mind: Suppose he was beaten? Deep down in his heart he knew that Darkie would win. Darkie was smaller than he was and not so heavy, but he was a fighter to the tips of his toes! In imagination he could feel Darkie's fists hammering his face. Already he could hear the laughter and the jeers of the men in the forecastle!

The thought of defeat sickened him. Licked by Darkie!

Twenty-five buckets had reached the 'tween decks. In a minute or two he would be back in the stokehole and Darkie would smile at him, like he could read what he was thinking of! And perhaps he could!

Darkie whom he had despised would smash him. He would be laughed at!

The perspiration trickled in streams down Dogfish's face as he stood on the grating by the ventilator. An icy breeze blew through the 'tween decks from the after well deck. He felt chilled to the bone.

He wouldn't be laughed at! He asked himself how he could help it.

What was that Darkie had said? Couldn't be got rid of, eh? ——! How he hated him!

Why couldn't he be got rid of?

Dogfish quivered. There was a drumming in his ears; waves of terror and hate and jealousy swept over him, wave upon wave; like the crash of the seas on the bridge deck above his head. He glanced swiftly to left and right but could see nothing but blackness and the empty 'tween-decks and the dim light of the stokehole through the grating. At the ash hoist engine, hidden from view, Micky Sefter was whistling once again.

Dogfish balanced the full bucket on the sill of the 'tween decks doorway and lifted the empty bucket into the ventilator. His hands were shaking.

"Darkie!" he called.

Some power outside himself, it seemed, greater than his own will, kept him from fastening the handles of the bucket on to the hooks at the end of the wire rope.

"Darkie!" he shouted. "Darkie!"

"What is it now?"

Darkie must be standing directly under the ventilator, answering him.

Dogfish dropped the bucket.

"Right! Lower away!" he said.

HE LISTENED. There came a dull metallic crash far below and then a scream that cut his breathing and left him gasping, sick and faint, leaning against the doorway.

"What the —— is that?" he heard Micky say.

Rousing himself by an effort, moving like an old, old man, Dogfish lifted the full bucket from the sill, slid it across the iron plates of the 'tween-decks, and dumped the ashes into the shute.

Then, still moving in the same sluggish way, as if held back by a weight dragging on his limbs, he returned to the ventilator.

Micky spoke to him in a sharp, strained voice from the ash hoist.

"Here, Dogfish, what's up? Did that bucket fall?"

"Fall?" said Dogfish. "Fall? 'Ow could it fall? Not if it didn't come off the 'ooks, it couldn't!"

He stumbled across the grating, grasped the hand rail and swung himself down the ladder that led to the stokehole beneath him.

Micky followed him.

Half way down the ladder Dogfish caught sight of Darkie lying stretched out on the iron plates beneath the ventilator, the empty ash bucket by his side.

He reached the floor of the stokehole, his heart thudding fiercely.

Darkie was dead!

"Darkie!" he whispered. "'Ere, Darkie!"

"He's dead!" said Micky. "An' it's your fault!"

Dogfish continued to stare at the body sprawling motionless before him, the right arm flung out, the face pillowed in the crook of the bent left arm, the legs twisted grotesquely.

He dropped on to his knees and touched the dead man's shoulder.

"Darkie! What's up, ol' man, can't yer speak to me?"

He rose to his feet quickly. There was something terribly strange in the limpness of still warm flesh and blood under his hand.

"Micky, boy," he said, "I can't touch him!"

"You dropped the bucket on purpose!"

said the boy hoarsely. "You —— murderer! You understand me. I heard you threaten him. You'll swing for this! What did you call to him for if you didn't want him right under the ventilator, eh? You murdered him!"

"Don't say that, Micky, boy! You dunno what you're talkin' about!"

The boy backed from him.

"Keep off!" he said sharply. "You murderer!"

"An accident!" said Dogfish in a blind panic. "S'elp me, ——! An accident!" He choked. Micky had guessed the truth! He'd swing for it!

"I'm going to fetch the fourth engineer!" said the boy.

"An accident, Micky—an accident—an acc——" But Micky was gone.

Alone in the stokehole, dimly lit by the two electric lights high up on the bulkhead, between the ventilators, and the red glow of the furnaces, Dogfish leaned against the ladder, his head bent, his shoulders bowed.

He had murdered a man in cold blood! ——! Why had he? Why had he? He had come to it at last, then! Killing!

——! how thirsty he was!

And then, as he drank, he heard the sound of footsteps, slow, cautious footsteps, and turning swiftly, dropped the bucket with a shriek.

Darkie Durham, his eyes dark in his white, coal-grimmed face, was advancing on him.

Dogfish cowered, his hands to his cheeks.

"Stop where yer are! Don't you touch me!"

Darkie was dead! Darkie was dead! And there he was, coming at him, on his feet! Oh, ——!

Dogfish could not stir. He was jammed against the iron bulkhead.

He tried to scream, but his voice was strangled in his throat.

"Tricked yer, didn't I!" said Darkie. "Thought I was dead, eh?" He laughed. "Well, I ain't, then!"

Dogfish fell at the second blow. He felt himself being dragged to his feet.

"Stand up, blast you! Stand up an' fight!"

Darkie's fists hammering at his mouth and chin, sent crashes of pain through his neck and spine, but the pain was heaven! His fear had gone. Darkie was alive and thrashing him! He was no murderer. He lay on his back, staring blindly toward the dark gratings far above, while Darkie straddled his middle and hit him hard, plunging blows with both fists.

The blows became dull thuds, heard rather than felt. Brilliant flashes of light dazzled his eyes. His senses were slipping away. He did not care—Darkie was alive.

And then there reached his ears a shout, as from a far distance. The chief engineer came hurrying into the stokehole. Some one, one of the firemen, had been killed! There had been an accident! Sefter's story had been incoherent, difficult to understand! One of the firemen had been killed by an ash bucket! He had said so!

But how could any one have been killed, when here were the other two men of the watch, fighting?

"What the —— are ye daein'?" shouted the chief. "Get up this meenit!" He hauled at Darkie's shoulders. "What fur are ye daein' that, Durham? Dae ye want to kill the man?"

"He wanted to kill me!" said Darkie.

Dogfish stood up. His head was ringing from the blows of Darkie's fists. There was a dull stabbing pain about his heart. His ribs ached. And, ——! How it hurt him to breathe, even! He raised his eyes and saw the chief and the fourth, the donkeyman, Micky Sefter and Darkie, all staring at him.

"I never wanted to kill 'im!" said Dogfish.

"You liar!" said Darkie.

"That'll dae!" said the chief.

"What would I want to kill a pal for?" said Dogfish. "I like Darkie; 'e's a pal of mine. The bucket slipped from the 'ooks! 'Ow did I know he was underneath! It was an accident, s'elp me —— it was!"

"O' course it was an eccident!" said the chief. He spoke to Darkie. "Yin man disna try to kill anither wi'oot cause, Durham! Dinna be a fule!" He looked at Dogfish. "An' you, Skedge, what he gi'ed ye sairves ye richt! Why the —— canna ye dae yer work properly? If thon ash bucket had hut Durham, he'd have been killed, an' you'd have been in the dock, accident or no accident! Dae ye unnerstaun'?"

Dogfish listened in a kind of stupor. For fear of what Darkie might do in a fight, he had tried to kill him. And he had failed. And Darkie had thrashed him!

"Do ye hear what I'm sayin'?" said the chief.

"Yes, sir," said Dogfish.

"You tried to murder me," said Darkie grimly.

Dogfish shook his head. "If I'd tried," he said: "if I 'ad, mark yer, do yer think I'd 'ave gone at it like that; droppin' an ash bucket! ——! I ain't a fool, quite, Darkie!"

"That'll dae!" said the chief sharply. "Steam's gaun back on ye! An' there's anither couple o' buckets of ash to dump! What the de'il dae ye think ye're drawin' yer pay fur, eh? Stop wastin' yer time!"

FOR some minutes after the engineers and the donkeyman had left the stokehold the three firemen worked hard and said nothing. Dogfish went from one furnace to the other, using the slice and then flinging on coal. He was still dazed from the effects of the thrashing, but in a strange, unfamiliar way he was happy. The noose that had dangled above his neck had been withdrawn and he was safe. ——! He could breathe!

Darkie was putting coal on to the No. 4 furnace. There was a smile on his lips still, but the smile brought to Dogfish no sense of injury or ill usage.

"Darkie," he said, "you don't want to believe everything, do yer?"

"No," said Darkie, "I don't! I don't believe that bucket comin' down the ventilator was an accident, to start with. You tried to kill me! And you got what was coming to yer, too! You know what I meant now, don't yer?" He slammed the door of the furnace and opened the forced draft checks. "You can't work an' you can't fight, you're just a big blow-hard, good for nothin' except talkin' an' swillin' whisky! Another time I won't let yer off so easy!"

Dogfish felt no resentment. Though his face was sore from the pounding of Darkie's fists, though his lips were cut, though he had lost a tooth and could scarcely see out of his eyes, so swollen already were his lids, he was safe! And he might have been hanged! But what a scrapper! What a scrapper that Darkie was!

"Here, Dogfish!" Darkie was speaking to him. "Dogfish, there's no drinkin' water in the bucket. Go on up to the galley an' fetch some."

Dogfish took the bucket and climbed the ladder. Micky Sefter crossed the stokehold floor to where Darkie stood.

"Darkie," said the boy, "who are you?"

"What d'jer mean?" said Darkie.

"Well, why did yer keep so quiet about being a fighter?"

Darkie smiled.

"I ain't had a fight in my life till tonight, Micky!"

The boy stared at him, wondering if he were in earnest or not.

"You mean to say you're not a fighter!"

"No," said Darkie. "I'm not. Any fool could have licked that stiff, o' course. He's big all right an' he's strong, but he's a coward! I guessed that soon's ever I seen him, but I wasn't sure. Tonight I found I was right. He ought to have licked me, when I started to chew the rag with him, but he didn't! He tried to kill me, instead!"

Darkie used the slide on the No. 7 furnace. The boy studied him in silence. Presently he spoke again.

"Darkie, other times you've let him say what he liked an' pretty nigh do what he liked, too! Tonight you were ready to eat him! What came over you? Where was the difference?"

Darkie spat on his hands and drove his shovel under the pile of coal at the mouth of the cross bunker.

"Was it because of him hitting me, Darkie, or what?"

Darkie left the shovel under the coal and stood upright.

"Because of him hittin' you, Micky? Can't say it was exackly! Not quite!"

"What was it, then, eh?"

Darkie was silent for a moment.

Then he spoke, slowly, a curiously shy look in his dark close set eyes.

"That sort o' feller," said Darkie, "ain't got no right to talk about fellers' mothers. I tell yer, Micky, when I heard what he said about my mother I wanted to choke the life out o' him!"

"I felt that way myself," said Micky, "though I didn't deserve to."

Sentiment in the stokehold of a tramp is out of place. A sudden embarrassment swept over the boy. Darkie would laugh at him, perhaps, but the need to speak now was irresistible.

"Darkie, I been a swine. I run away from my mother about eighteen months ago. I

ain't written, or nothin', since. Mebbe I'll go home to her!"

Darkie nodded. "You won't never be sorry," he said.

"It was you sayin' that about your mother, Darkie, that made me see what I'd been doin'!" The boy's cheeks were burning under the coal dust. "I bet you got a mother that's proud of you, eh, Darkie!"

Darkie gave him a quick side glance and stooping moved a shovel of coal from the bunker door to the heap within reach of the starboard boiler. He straightened his back and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Micky," he said. "I never had no mother, not to my knowledge. They found me on the steps of a workhouse, wrapped in a bit of a blanket, with no name, only part of an address with County Durham on it. See? That's what they called me. But I always like to think of my mother as not a bad sort at heart, Micky, a pretty gal with blue eyes an' brown hair. An' I don't like fellers sayin' anything mean against her, not knowin' what kind of a life she had to put up with. It's been a help to feel she was someone real an' not—not jus' a workhouse. And I don't like fellers sayin' anythin' mean against her. You understand, Micky, don't yer?"

And although Micky did not understand in the least, nevertheless he nodded his head and said:

"Why, yes, Darkie, of course!"

"This is my last trip in the stokehole," said Darkie. "I'm gettin' married to a girl at Bristol. Widder. Had a hard life, same as me. Workhouse foundlin'! We don't expect much, neither of us; mebbe we'll settle down proper!"

Dogfish Skedge came down the ladder, almost jovial.

"Here you are, Darkie. Gosh, you got a punch! I knew you was a fighter soon as I seen yer. I'm sore all over. Have a drink, Darkie, old man."

Darkie took the bucket and drank.

HOW THE CHINOOK JARGON GREW

by **W. B. M.**

THE Chinook trade language, America's only real lingua franca, was already in use when Lewis and Clark visited the Columbia in 1804. Astor's agents along the Northwest coast and the British traders at Nootka had been handicapped by the fact that fourteen languages, as different from each other as English is from Arabic, were spoken by the natives.

The Chinook dialect, which was simplest and easiest to pronounce by all the tribes, furnished the grammar of the jargon and also a few dozen of its words, but the language, like Topsy, "just growed."

In its ability to assimilate words it rivals English. It drew terse expressions from the dialects of the tribes that spoke it. A great number of its words were formed by onomatopœia, that is, by the sounds representing the thing spoken of. Thus *tiktik* means a watch; *tum-tum* means heart beating; *tum-watah* is a rapids; *wa-wa* means to talk; *heehee*—but you can guess!

From the French Canadian voyageurs the jargon, characteristically enough, drew many of its expressions that relate to love-making, drinking, singing, dancing and the like. Thus:

Beebee from *baiser* means to kiss; *labouti* from *le bouteille* means a bottle or the contents thereof—*mahsie* from *mercie* means thanks; *malieh* and *tanse* come from the French words meaning to marry and to dance.

English furnished some peculiar expressions. *Oleman* from old man means worn out; *kwahta* and *tollah* are recognizable coins; *waum-sick* means fever; *stick-house*, a frame dwelling; *nose* means promontory; Americans are *Bostonni;* Englishmen are *Kinchortchi*—King George.

Pelton was the name of a crazy man who lived at Astoria. So *mika Pelton* means, "You are crazy."

The inability of the coast tribes to pronounce r. f and nasal n—in this respect as in others they resemble the Chinese—gives a curious twist to some English words. *Lice* and *glease* and *cauppy*, for rice and grease and coffee, sound like an Oriental cookee in a lumber camp.

OUT OF THE JUNGLE

By GORDON MacCREAGH

Author of "The Courage Medicine," "The Trail Smellers," etc.

THE senhor has been looking for me for two days? *Bom*, what information of the upper river is it that you want? For it is getting to be so that when men send strangers to look for Theophilo Da Costa it is always that they require information of the back country beyond the great rapids.

Not of the rivers, but of a man? Dom Perigoso? The Mister Dangerous? Hm! Why come to me, senhor? All Manaos City knows this man. Ask of the waiter who brings the little coffee that you have just ordered. Go out and ask the loungers along the water front. They will tell you that he is young and big of bone and that he knows the rivers and that he is Dom Perigoso; and, *basta*, that will be all that you will learn—unless they might dare to search back into the foul memories of their class and retail a savory scandal of his past. As for me, I am a man of the upper rivers and no retailer of biographies.

The senhor has a letter from my good friend Tio Romeiro? I may be permitted to see? Oho, this is different! The senhor is an *Americano* who requires a guide to take him into the jungles for the purpose of making a survey of the cedar wood, and he would know whether this Dom Perigoso is a fit person to entrust with his safety.

The senhor will be good enough to accept my apologies. I have dealt with many *Americanos*, and some of them have been whole men. And this Mister Dangerous, perhaps he, too, is an *Americano*—or maybe an *Ingles* or an *Allemão*—some one of the light haired peoples. I know no more than himself.

Yet who else knows more of the truth about him than I? And since this matter of going into the upper jungles is truly a matter of entrusting not only one's safety but one's whole life to the man who guides, and since my good friend Tio Romeiro is voucher for you, I will tell what I know, and you may then judge for yourself what manner of man is this guide.

WHO he is or what his name, I cannot tell. And he—if he ever knew—has long since forgotten. But of what moment is it how a man is called? It is what he is that we of the upper rivers take into account. And as often as not we call him some name that grows out of his character and forget the useless one that his fond parents gave.

So with Perigoso. Out of the jungle he came—was brought, rather, by his mother when he was—how do I know how old? A child of four or six, or maybe ten. I know nothing of how they look. She came down from somewhere above with the lad, a frail pale woman who was paying her penalty to the jungle, which is no place for a white woman to live; and she said that his father had already paid his penalty to the jungle, which is a place for few white men to live for too long.

Those were the days when rubber was the new king of Amazonas, and people acclaimed it as black gold; and men of all the nationalities came and went throughout

and around Manaos and infested all the nearer rivers, and money flowed like in a mining camp; and no man knew nor cared who came or who went or whether with a woman or alone. Not like now, when the police take the full ten finger prints of all strangers and make them pay for the registration.

The city was but emerging in those days out of the jungle to its greatness that died so swiftly. And, like the jungle, it was no place for a woman to live—alone. So she died and left the boy motherless; and, as the money-mad men of the period said with a careless laugh, truly fatherless also. So the good *padres* took him and brought him up and clothed and fed him and gave him an education better than that of most of the men who laughed so carelessly.

In which respect he was better off than many another who had both mother and father. But none the less such is an ill beginning for a lad. For in a wild city such as was Manaos of the rubber days there are always many who would cover the suspicion of their own birth by pointing the loud finger of scorn at an orphan brat.

So it followed that the boy in all his little comings and goings and wordy arguments was pushed aside and derided by the other boys, whose natural inclination at that age is that of young demons. When he would venture to hold his own in a discussion, always was the clinching argument the obscurity of his fatherhood. Though it is my belief that the woman spoke truth. For many men in those days went up into the nearer jungles to look for rubber; and knowing nothing of the jungles, took their wives—and the jungle ever took its steady toll.

Yet what matter whether she spoke truth or no? The handicap which the boy carried was no fair test. In those very years when his character and assurance should have been growing, he was ever thrust under and overridden with rough scorn. The senhor understands, no?

So he came to his youth. Big of bone and sandy of complexion. Strong enough to tear apart with his hands any of those frailer, darker tormentors of his. Yet shambling of gait and furtive of look; for the spirit which should have been his had been too much suppressed and had not kept pace with his growth.

And then, since youth is the time for troublesome emotions, he came, of course, to meet the girl, and hung with the attraction of opposites awkwardly round the skirts of a fiery little minx who lived in the Rua de Leon and queened it among the lads of the city. All the suppression and heartache of his boyhood he poured out beneath her window in the most mournful of the songs of our Portuguese tongue—than which no love lyrics of any people, even the senhor's own—are more distressing.

The very musicians whom he hired to play his accompaniments laughed as they thrummed their guitars and injected ribald impromptus of their own composition. And she, she giggled from behind the bars and played tricks upon him, such as compelling her duenna, who was a sleepy, silly woman of half Indian blood, to slip her fat hand through the hangings and drop the rose or the perfumed piece of rag or whatever it might be. But, *carramba*, it takes a long time to persuade a love sick youth that he is being laughed at.

Then came, of course, the rival. A flashy youth who had achieved some sort of leadership by reason of his assertiveness over the rest and who desired the girl doubtless for no other reason than to flaunt his superiority. Joaquim, was his name—Joaquim Something-or-other. I never knew the rest of it.

He told the lovesick one on one or two occasions in the presence of others to stay away from that particular window; to go down into the little streets behind the market where were half-breed maids and Zambos who would be glad to accept the attentions of a white man for no other reason than his color. And all his friends laughed loudly at the witticism. Yet so infatuated was the other, that in spite of his pusilanimity which held him from resenting the insult, he still sang his mournful dirges and paid his ridiculous court.

Till one day this Joaquim took opportunity in a public café when he was surrounded by his friends to call loudly to the other that he brought word from the Senhorita Whatever-her-name-was to say that she wanted no bastard of unknown parentage hanging about under her window of nights; and he laid hand, as he spoke, to the pretty little dagger with the imitation jeweled hilt that so many of our young bloods affected.

The senhor knows, of course, that this is fighting talk which no man may pass by.

But this wretched youth, alas for him, had so grown into the way of being browbeaten and thrust under that the spirit that should have flamed within him at the contumely was but a weak little spark, almost dead for lack of nurture; and he—well, he took backwater, as you *Americanos* say, and slunk shamefaced from the place.

A common enough tale, is it not, senhor? I tell it but to explain how this youth acquired his name. For after that he was known throughout the city as "Dom Periguiça." The senhor understands perhaps enough of the Portuguese?

No? The *periguiça*, then, is a feeble animal that hangs upside down from trees; and though it has three powerful great curved claws on each foot, it shrinks and moans and resents no sort of rough treatment. How do you call it in English? A sloth? Ah, yes. So, Sir Sloth, they named him in scorn; and the name was received with hilarity in all the cafés and promenades; and Dom Periguiça the unhappy youth was known as thenceforth.

We have a saying, "Hang an evil name upon your dog, and the dog will soon hang himself." So it was with this Dom Periguiça. When a man has been shamed beyond the limit of his self-respect what is there left to hold him from sinking out of sight?

Having once submitted to contumely the youth was lost. He was ashamed to be seen in the cafés where the ill-concealed jeers met him. He shrank even from meeting in the street those who had known him. He lost his little employment, whatever it was; and presently the haunts of the white folks saw him no more.

Such a condition, senhor, is like a quicksand. It grips one by the knees, and the sinking then is slow but sure. The Periguiça, having furnished his little entertainment, was soon forgotten, except for an occasional report during the next year or two that he had been seen slinking furtively along the back streets where lived the breeds and the negro Zambos who were willing to treat him as an equal on account of his color alone.

An ill condition for a white man to sink to. But, *qué carramba*, who can save a man from such but himself? And it is an inexorable law of quicksands that the deeper a man sinks and the more desperate his case, the less strength has he to save himself.

So presently even the occasional reports ceased; and those who remembered the merry jest when the talk swung backward in the cafés laughed carelessly and said that he had doubtless long ago fed himself to the *caimans* in the creeks below the new abattoir.

AND then, when the forgetfulness was complete, whom should I chance upon but this Dom Periguiça again. I was preparing for a long travel up the Rio Negro to the Casiquiare, the natural canal that connects the Negro with the Orinoco beyond the borders of Venezuela, and I had a small freight to carry as far as Santa Isabel for a Greek trader—who later swindled me out of the half of my payment.

No more than half a boat load it was. But finnicky little stuff. A few packages of knives and a half-dozen of ax heads and case or two of salt and so forth; and they were to be delivered, a package here and a half a package there to this petty contractor and that little *padrão* of those who gathered Brazil nuts and assembled them at Santa Isabel. Stuff that required an endless tallying and accounting.

I, senhor, am a river man and no mathematician. So I let it be known that I could make use of a tally clerk for this little portion of my journey. And who should come to me and beg me almost with tears in his eyes to take him but this Periguiça.

"*Celestes!*" said I, "I thought you were dead." And then, remembering the tales about him of not so very long ago, "But consider; this journey in a small *batelão* up a river which is four miles wide is not without its little dangers."

This I said unthinkingly; and in the next instant I regretted it, for I had no desire to hurt unnecessarily the feelings of the youth who was, in all conscience, miserable enough. Lean he was and grown to a shambling manhood with overlarge hands and feet sticking forth from his inadequate clothing, and with the eyes of an animal that has been well beaten yet not enough to drive it to desperate bay. Yet I marveled that he had contrived at least to keep himself clean.

"This," said I to myself, "is a sign that he has not drowned the last of his self-respect in the liquor shops."

For it is my observation, senhor, that a white man, however low his sinking, retains

at least his pride of race until his sensibilities have been dulled by drink. A man may well live among the lesser races by reason of adversity. It is when he falls to swilling with them that he is past redemption. So I said to the lad—

"What madness have you that you suddenly want to go up to the border of civilization?"

And he told me with a mournful admission that had its pathos:

"No madness, Senhor Theophilo. But the need of remaining alive. Here I am known, and by my own people I am not wanted. Out of the jungle I came, and back to the jungle I go."

So I told him:

"You are a fool. The jungle is no place for a white man to live."

But he spread out his big hands and said—

"Neither is Manaos City—for such a white man as I."

So, *qué diabo*, it was after all no business of mine; and I, remembering his priestly education, knew that he would at least be an adept handler of accounts. So I said:

"*Bom*, very well, I will hire you for the tallying of all this mess of the Greek's and you shall come with me as far as Santa Isabel."

Whereat he was almost on the point of weeping again. But he was grateful. *Sancta Ma'e*, how the man was grateful for having been taken away from a life which must have been for him very close to the ultimate perdition! How carefully he kept tally in his priestly round hand of all the confusion of petty gear! And how he expanded as the days of boat travel went by in an atmosphere where he did not feel himself to be an object of scorn to all white men and of no more than toleration to black!

There came times when he even smiled. Crouching in the prow of the *batelão* he would watch for hours the dense miles of river fringe swing by where no man lived, and the furtive look in his eyes would give place to an open glow. Not the light of exhilaration that you or I might show when the sun is hot and the river breeze is cool against the cheek; for the spirit in him was too crushed to take delight in the good things of the open places; but a somber glow as of a jaguar on a limb whose thoughts no man can guess.

And he would sniff with uplifted head like a jaguar at the down river winds which brought with them no jeer or careless insult. It was then that he would smile, slowly and with nodding head. And then suddenly memory would come back to him; and with memory, the instinctive quick flash back over his shoulder with the hunted look to see if any one might be laughing at him.

I tell you, senhor, it was a difficult matter to travel with that unfortunate young man without having him feel that he was—well, how shall I say—not altogether an equal. And it is a terrible thing for a white man to feel that he must speak to another shrinkingly and with respect. Yet so he spoke to me, addressing me always as Senhor Theophilo; and always he asked questions about Santa Isabel; about the few nut gatherers there and how they lived. Truly I felt a pity for that man whose interest in white men and in their doings was dead.

Yet, *carramba*, what affair was it of mine? His life was his own to sink or to save.

In due time we came to Santa Isabel; and I concluded my little business there, and he made a faithful accounting of all the petty trash of the Greek's, and I summoned my crew of up-river Indians who waited for me there, and prepared to proceed on my long and arduous journey up to the Casiquiare.

And then, forsooth, arose another heart-rending outcry. He came to me, again almost weeping, and begged me.

"Here I can not stay," he said. "That man, the half-breed who keeps the nut sheds, knows me, and he has called me by—by that name. And—and God pity me—I dare not kill him."

And he implored me to take him with me up river, away, anywhere where he could hide from the scorn that he could no longer bear. He would work for nothing, he said. He would be my slave. He would demand nothing other than his food. And he would be faithful and true and all the rest of it, without end.

But I, *meu Deus*, while I felt pity for him, I had a whole man's journey before me and a man's work. I could not saddle myself with one whom even my Indians would presently discover and deride.

Yet I did not know what to counsel him. The best I could think of was a feeble advice to go back and be brave and fight his own battle back to self-respect. Copy book

maxims only, and useless at that. For in those days there was no regular steamer to Santa Isabel. Only an occasional launch in every four or six months; and, as he pointed out to me, no other trader who came to take away nuts would take him on his *batelão* with him—which, of course, was most lamentably true.

So, after much consideration, I told him:

"Look, this I will do for you. I will give you a dugout canoe and food such as you will need; and you must then go down river as far as you may care or dare. By keeping close to the shore there is little danger; and

you can find some new rubber settlement where the men are perhaps strangers from some place other than Manaos. Take work with some *seringuero*, and take another name or something. Take also your courage in both hands; and then, if God is good, you may win back to your manhood."

Severe talk, perhaps, senhor. But what more could I do? His case was impossible. And I, *carramba*, I was no savior of men's souls. So I gave him the outfit I promised, and added some little trade goods beyond what I owed him—for indeed my heart bled for his misery—and I came away up river.

A BAD journey that was. Everything went wrong. At the great *caxoeira* of São Gabriel I lost a man. Right at the beginning of the rapid it was too. The rope by which we were hauling up against the fierce current slipped from the bitts, and before we could check it it had taken the man with a turn round his ankle, and in a flash, before we could do anything, he was gone. So we were compelled to make the rest of the haul with a short crew—which means something, I can tell you, when one is struggling for some five days to progress through forty miles of furious water.

Then at the mission, the last lone point of civilized habitation above the rapids, I was compelled to lose a week while the good padre stuffed me full of quinine. So angered was I at the mischance that I deliberately refused to make an offering at the shrine for my recovery—though I felt, indeed, that I owed a thanks for that I had not brought that poor devil of a Periguiça along with me.

"*Sancta Ma'el*" thought I, "what a time we should have had with him."

I thought often of that unhappy young man's case thereafter as I progressed up the river, and I wondered how the outcome would be. For a white man who can no longer live among white men must do one of two things. He will go among the savages and will either, on account of his superior intelligence, become a king among them; or he will, on account of his inferior physical dexterity with insufficient tools, sink to a position of dependence upon the labor of such women as he may acquire.

The problem held interest enough to occupy my mind during the solitude of travel—till more trouble came, and, like others had done before, I forgot him.

At Boa Vista, which was no more than a name on the map, I found suddenly a new grass hut where no man had lived before; and in the hut a stubby fellow who told me that this was the Venezuelan border and I could go no farther. This to me, Theophilo Da Costa, who had spent my life traveling in those back countries where there were no borders.

But just in those days, you see, senhor, when rubber was beginning to be found in the upper rivers, much importance was suddenly being attached to boundaries which had been no more than imaginings in the minds of the map-makers but a year before.

Such a prohibition was, of course, no hindrance to me. But it was an annoyance and a delay; for that fool of a *Venezolano* was so inflated with the importance of his position away there beyond the borders of nowhere that for a period of some days he prated of his integrity before he would finally accept twenty milreis and let me pass.

Truly did that extortion gall me; and the temptation to obliterate that official and his petty outpost was great. But my little

business which I was working on would require that I should return there later.

"*'Cremento,*" said I to myself. "Twenty milreis was cheaper than a private war with Venezuela." So I bought him and passed on.

But what need to weary the senhor with a recital of the hardships of travel in that country? You will not be going that far, and you will find your own journey hard enough in all conscience. Suffice it that I remained in the Casiquiare some two months and then came down river again to meet with the greatest surprize of my life.

Not so far below Boa Vista was I when, passing by a village of the Kubbeos, a man hailed me from the shore. The water at that place was not particularly fast and there was a convenient eddy before the village. So I turned my *batelão* in to see what the man wanted—and, *miravel*, who should it be but the Periguiça!

"*Sanctos!*" I exclaimed. "How do you come here and why?"

He smiled slowly with his somber eyes.

"In your canoe which you gave me," he said simply. "Down, I could not go. For how should I know whom I might suddenly meet in some place who would publish me before all strangers? So I came on up."

The doggedness of this man to get away from everything that he had known was astounding.

"But, name of a saint!" I cried. "What do you propose to do with yourself then. Where are you aiming to go?"

To which he merely repeated his creed.

"Out of the jungle I came and back to the jungle I go."

"And how much farther do you think that you can go, madman," I asked him, "before you come again to men and cities? Not four days farther up is a *Venezolano* who wears a uniform and a sword and claims the half of the earth as his dominion."

But he was content.

"Then here I stay," he said with finality. "This is a good place and these Kubbeos are a friendly people."

"But—but—" I started to remonstrate.

But no more. What could I say? Did one ever hear the like before? Here was this youth whom I had left some three months journey down-river to return in quiet safety to some rubber camp; and now he sat in a Kubbeo village at just about the midmost point between civilizations. How did he get here, I asked him. By what miracle had he arrived thus far in a single dugout canoe; and had he not been afraid?

The question slipped from my tongue before I could check myself. But he, poor fellow, was accustomed to meeting that thought, and he felt in no wise hurt. He turned out his hands.

"Out of the jungle am I," said he. "Why should I fear the people of the jungle who are a kindly people?"

And what could I say? It was true. All those people of the upper Negro, Huitotos and the Baniwas and the Kubbeos, are a shy, simple folk; and in those days, before the rubber gatherers had penetrated to their country, they held no antagonism against the white men.

Today, the rubber gatherers have been, and after their few short years of exploitation, have gone; and nothing of their doing remains except an angry hostility among the Indians. But then it was different. I realized then that it was only white men with their many refinements of brutality that this man shrank from meeting.

An ill condition for a white man to be in, as I have said before. But one for which there was no remedy except in the man himself. So I left him. Only one request he made. He brought me the little money I had paid him for his tallying and said:

"Senhor Theophilo, there are some little things that I shall need for my use—" and he enumerated sundry tools and things—"and since your business will bring you back here in a few months, I would beg you——"

But I told him to go to the blue fiend with his money; and I came away, leaving him to the life which he had chosen with such persistence.

NOW what would the senhor think would be the outcome of such a condition of living? Would the youth rise by reason of his superior intelligence to be a king among those savages; or would he sink by reason of his civilized dependence upon a hundred and one artificial aids to life to a position of degradation among them? A question which I asked myself many a time as I traveled down-river; for truly the problem interested me, who for the sake of my own business made a study of Indians in their relation to white men.

So it was not without speculation that I came again after nearly a year to the Casiquiare, wondering how this youth who had

withdrawn himself from his own people had progressed.

I found him — how shall I say? Improved? I do not know whether his condition would be called exactly a betterment. One improvement there was, and a marked one. The furtive shrinking expression had left his eyes and he walked now among men without looking eternally over his shoulder to see whether one might be pointing the finger of scorn at him. The habit of flinching had passed from him among these people who knew nothing of his story to jeer at.

So far, good. But for the rest—not so good. His little clothing had long since reached the stage of shreds and hung on him in strings; and he wore, in place of a hat which is the badge of the white man all the world over, a headband of plaited fiber to keep the hair out of his face, as did the Indians. Lean he was and stringy; but hard and brown and well fed. I looked to see whether with all this there had come in the place of flinching that assertiveness of the white man over a lesser race.

But so much of a miracle was perhaps too much to expect. A spirit which has been well crushed in its youth does not expand to man-sized proportions in the space of a year. Instead of assertiveness, therefore, I found a certain submission. How shall I explain it? Not humility; for self-respect was beginning to grow where he was at least the equal of other men. But submission to custom and convention; acceptance of tribal law. Out of the jungle he had come, as he said; and back to the jungle he had gone. The white man had gone Indian.

He was a maker of canoes, he told me; and as such he accepted with eager gratitude the few tools and things that I brought him. With their help, he said, he hoped to establish himself at last in his sphere of usefulness, and as such to hold a recognized place in the tribe.

For these are a community people, you must understand, senhor. They live in great community houses; and each man, as well as each woman, must do his share of labor for the common welfare. He had been set first to hunting, he said, to bring in meat with sundry others of the strong young men. Doubtless on account of his height and strength these primitive people had instinctively ascribed to him a prowess which entitled him to the most honorable occupation among them.

But the thing was, of course, absurd. Of what value is a white man with a bow and arrow or a blow gun? These things come with practise from youth up. Ineptness was here his undoing. Catching fish, therefore, was the next stage down the line. Yet here again; can a white man suddenly learn the intricacies of making a fish trap out of split reeds or know the ways of fish? Well for him—or for any white man in the same circumstances—that they were a community people. Were he left to his own devices, he would have starved.

So he was demoted once again to a mere artizan grade; a digger-out of tree trunks to make canoes; where he discovered a certain facility of his hands and there stuck. A descent enough for a man of his muscles, be he white or brown. *Carramba*, the next stage would have been musical instruments, reed flutes; or the cultivation of *mandioca* with the women.

Yet at the canoes—thank heaven for the prestige of the race—he seemed to be established; and so remained at least a man; even though his word would carry no great weight in council as against that of others of the more honorable professions. And the worst of it was that he seemed to be content. As long as he was at least a man, the equal of other men, not flouted or jeered at, his broken spirit craved no more.

Aie-aie, my heart bled for him.

AND so I left him and went on up to the Casiquiare; and at Boa Vista on the way I found that the *Venezolano* guard of the frontier had died and that apparently the word had not yet reached the far outside. At any rate, no provision had been made for his replacement.

So as a little matter of patriotic regard for my own country I took up his frontier mark and carried it a hundred miles farther up river with me and planted it again at Cucuí, where the next man found it and accepted it as it was; and there the frontier stands to this day. So I take credit to myself such as few men may boast. That of having added a hundred miles to the borders of my country.

My business in the Casiquiare this time was swift; for the Indians knew now what I wanted and their supplies were ready. Plumes I was bringing out, for which I received a good price from a French buyer

in Manaos; for those were the days before grandmotherly societies in the senhor's country as well as in sundry others had succeeded in prohibiting the importation of feathers.

There was more money in those days in feathers even than in rubber, and the outlay and risk were but a tenth. A half pound of salt or a small mirror I paid to the Indians for an ounce of the plumes, which I sold to that Frenchman for twenty-five milreis—and he, as I have heard, being a profiteer without conscience, sold them again to the makers of hats in Paris for three times that value.

But this I did not know then. I considered the market good; and for the rest, as with all trade, it was but a matter of organizing the supply. Since my Indians knew now that I would pay a high price for feathers, they had them waiting for me, and I made my collections without loss of time and returned to Manaos; and a period of some five months passed before I returned to fetch another cargo and to inspect my white man who had been well on the way to becoming an Indian of the third grade.

I found an Indian complete. A tall brown man with work-hardened muscles who wore a girdle of bark cloth and a head band and grass sandals and no more. Yet he stalked forward and greeted me as "*Compadre*," instead of, the Senhor Theophilo, as he had always insisted upon before.

"Oho," said I to myself. "This is an improvement this time. He has found his place among men, and with it he has found the spirit to look men in the face. A true son of the jungle. One of those few white men whom the jungle will take into its lap, and instead of killing him off-hand, will make a whole man of him."

And I shook him by the hand and congratulated him on his health, which was a marvel, and invited him to come and eat with me in my *batelão*, and we would talk over men and happenings. But he with one blow shattered the half of the illusion about improvement.

"Gladly will I come and sit and talk," said he. "But eat, I can not; for the *ipagé* has called for a general abstinence till sundown while he makes some magic or other."

"*Sanctos!*" I cried. "Have you come down to listening to the hocus-pocus of the witch doctors?"

He denied the charge swiftly. Yet with a certain shamefacedness that indicated more than he would admit; and he quoted lamely the proverb:

"'When one lives in the river one does not quarrel with the *caiman*.' Since all the village fasts, why should I flout the beliefs of these good people, my friends? And as for the *ipagés*, laugh not so scornfully, my friend; for they are not altogether charlatans. This I tell you, who live among them and have ample opportunity to observe."

Quê caralhos! This was the worst yet. Beliefs, he called them, you will notice, senhor; instead of superstitions. And I was convinced while he still spoke that he himself was more than half over the edge of believing. A dozen times I had seen the same thing; even among river men; yet never so marked as this.

Yet it is inevitable. A man can not live in close association with others, be they civilized or savage, without absorbing something of their minds as well as of their manners. And with him it was hereditary. Back to the jungle he had gone; and the jungle had taken him into its bosom as its own long lost son.

Health he had gained and strength, and a certain assurance to talk once more with a white man—or at all events with me, who was the only one he now ever saw. It was a matter of gratification to me that he had not sunk to a position of dependence in the tribe, as I had feared when I found him on the downward grade from the more honorable occupations.

But this submission to tribal superstitions was not good to see in a white man. Yet he showed me now another angle of his development, and I began to see hope for him again; and I was glad, for I had come to regard this youth almost as a protégé of mine.

This was the sign. Just as his civilized handicap of inexpertness had reduced him in status; so now his civilized advantage of intelligence began to assert itself. He brought me a half dozen of grass hammocks and said to me:

"*Amigo* Theophilo, I have here a thought for a small business. Look, these hammocks are of the finest. The fiber of the *tucum* grows here extraordinarily well, and these Indians twist it by hand under water and make such work as you see. Not many. Here one and there another in the

back creeks as one chief dies and another is elected. But I have persuaded some of the skilled ones to make up this half dozen, promising them in return, machetes and ax heads. Now do you, Theophilo, take and sell them for me in Manaos. They are much better than those I have seen occasionally in the trade store of Araujo Companha, and should fetch a good price."

I smote him on the shoulder.

"*Carramba,*" I said. "This is splendid. You are becoming a trader, no less. Assuredly will I sell them for you; and such hammocks should bring two hundred milreis apiece, which I will translate into goods for you—and my commission for the whole transaction will be one-third."

With which he was well content. And indeed I had made him a fair bargain; for the rule of the river is one-half.

"But look you," said I to him. "Take advice from one who knows this business of trade."

And I told him how he should make a flat price with his workers; an ax head or a few fish hooks or whatever it might be for each hammock; and the profit would then be legitimately his for further operations. And I warned him that he must pay scrupulously what he promised, and that he should then give a small present in addition, thereby retaining the good will of his workers. Much good advice out of my hard experience I gave him for nothing; and I told him also the final secret of all trade.

"Organize your labor, my son," I told him. "See to it that you can deliver a specified quantity at a specified time and of a specified quality. That is all. If you can do this you can be a contractor; for this hammock business offers a greater profit even than feathers.

"But organize above all your labor. Go swiftly up and down river and set the weavers to work to prepare a store of hammocks against my return. Promise a good payment and have no fear. Out of your profits on these six you will be able to pay for all the hammocks you are likely to get, since six months goes to the weaving of one such.

"After that, when the Indians learn that knives and machetes can indeed be acquired for hammocks you can establish yourself as hammock king; and then all possibilities are open to you; even the calling of a trader of the upper rivers; and you will then be a whole man among men."

As I spoke his somber eyes glittered, and his lips set in the expression of determination for which they were made; while he nodded slowly to himself and mused on the picture, looking, with that trick of his, for all the world like a jaguar on a tree limb. Till finally he said:

"*Amigo,* you offer great possibilities to me. I had thought to be an Indian and here to end my days among a simple and a kindly folk—as maybe I shall do still. But I shall do this thing that you tell me. And after the experiment has proven itself we shall see. While these Indians are my superiors in courage and natural skill, my superior intelligence of a white man may yet make an honorable place for me. We shall see."

AND so I took his hammocks and left him. Full of high hopes was I for his regeneration; for the lad had shown himself to me to have good metal in him. Believe me, Senhor, a man bred in the cities can not root himself up from the life which he has known and travel suddenly in a dugout canoe to the farthest center of the jungles and there keep alive for a couple of years unless he has something. So I said to myself:

"Behold this soft metal of misfortune tempered by the crucible of hell in that tropic jungle and ready to emerge as a good blade."

And I took credit to myself for my share in this regeneration and determined that the next time I went to the good Padre Balzola for an absolution I would lay it before him to my good account.

But, *qué diabo,* I was over confident. A man whose spirit has been broken during those early years of the building period does not find it again, whole to his hand, so quickly.

In this wise the disillusionment came: I took the hammocks down to the store of Araujo in Manaos and told him that I had them on consignment for a friend of mine who lived up river.

And while the younger partner, the son, admired their texture, a sort of a trader fellow came in to purchase supplies and exchange gossip; for that great supply house is the meeting place for all river men. I knew the man slightly, a braggart fellow

by the name of Joaquim who owned a couple of good boats and peddled goods among the down-river rubber men. He showed an unwarranted interest in these hammocks and inquired with an ill-veiled carelessness from where they had come. So I told him and added for good measure:

"Information which will not profit you at all, my friend; for that is in the upper rivers where *you* will never go."

But he smiled silkily, showing white teeth, and said to the younger Araujo:

"*Ouve lhe.* Listen to how these up-river men like to imagine always that nobody but themselves can travel their water."

And the Araujo, shrugging—

"Well, it must be admitted that it is the few who go."

Whereupon the fellow imparted a fierce upward twist to his mustache and laughed with loud bravado.

"And yet," he boasted, "I have been planning for a long time to make an up-river trip myself for the purpose of picking up a business opportunity or two which these rapid-runners have overlooked. In fact, I am even now outfitting for the upper Negro."

Whereupon it was my turn to laugh; and I said:

"Good, I will give you directions and channel markings of the rapids; and you will do me favor in return by carrying word to my friend that I am delayed somewhat by business and that I shall arrive shortly with his goods."

And I added also for the benefit of Araujo—

"Tell him also that the news is good; that I have sold his hammocks—though for no more than the half of their worth; a paltry two hundred and fifty milreis apiece."

And therewith I swaggered from the store and left them to scandalize me behind my back. And I laughed as I went; for it was no news to me about this fellow's up-river aspirations. I was well informed that he had taken that fool of a French buyer and had made him very drunk one night in the Café dos Estrangeiros and had extracted from him there information about the prices that he paid me for my egret plumes. I knew, too, that he had swiftly grasped the opportunity to take into his employ a man whom I had discharged on the occasion of my return previous to this one.

I had been sorry to lose the man; for he was a good man on the steering paddle and he knew the currents. But the fool had stolen a woman of the Huitotos and had kept her for a week while I was away in a small canoe up the Igarapé Pucanawa to make an arrangement with that creek tribe for otter skins. So, while I saved his life on that occasion, I got rid of him; for I was not going to become embroiled in any tribal vengeances on my future journeys through the Huitoto country.

With this man's knowledge—which I had taught him—I felt that this braggart man might well reach into the upper country. But I had no fear that any down-river man would steal my business from me. So I laughed at the man and insulted him with an easy mind.

But, saints protect us, how easily may a man who thinks himself secure overlook his vulnerable points! For my feather business I was safe enough. But this business of the hammocks from which I was hoping so much for my protégé—to say nothing of my own commission—*carramba*, that was another matter. Much as I might have advised the lad, it is, after all, experience that pulls the sure paddle.

Consider, senhor, what happened. This was told to me later by that woman stealer who was an eye witness to it all.

THE braggart boatman reached the upper country. Mischances and accidents did he meet with a-plenty. But the point is that he reached—thanks to my own trained man. Coming then to this Kubbeo village, he made a special halt to give himself the pleasure of telling my friend how he was on his way to fetch feathers from the Indians of the Casiquiare.

Credit must be given to the man for his boldness; for how was he to know that that friend would not take my part and resist him? But he had, it must be admitted, an aggressive assurance that carried him far in argument. So he stepped off at the little landing before the village and was very properly surprized at the apparent Indian who was pointed out to him as a white man who spoke good Portuguese, and who, upon recognizing a stranger, made no further advance. His surprize, not unnaturally in the circumstances, changed to the disdain which so many feel for one who has gone native.

"Hey," he called. "Come here, 'Squaw

Man.' I have a message for you from that arrogant fellow who calls himself your friend."

And then, as the lad came forward to hear my message, the disdain changed, with recognition, to loud scorn.

"Oho," he crowed. "——! Look then at who is this friend of that Theophilo! The Periguiça, no less! Ho-ho, my old rival, the fatherless one! *Canastos*, what a meeting!"

Senhor, had I been there, I would have given the lad a machete and told him—

"Go, kill this man here and now."

And so would have saved his manhood for him. For with my encouragement and moral support the new spirit that was growing in him would have surely risen to the call; and, having wiped out the insult, would have established itself as a firm conviction of confidence for all time.

But alas and evil luck for the wretched youth. There was no one to encourage him; to stiffen his manhood. Alone he stood, and face to face with one who had mastered him of old.

As for me, *louco que foi*, fool that I was. To me it had never occurred that this Joaquim might be the same blustering youth who had put him to shame in the matter of that little cat of the Rua de Leon. There are a thousand Joaquims, all the way from saints to peons. How should I have suspected such an evil coincidence? Though had an inkling of it come to me, I would never have subjected my young friend to so drastic and sudden a test. I would have delayed the fellow; would have scuttled his boat; would have kidnaped and held him by force, if necessary; till I might have gone up myself and at least have prepared the way.

But it was an ill fate that pursued the unfortunate from his birth. Much as he had grown, he was not yet ready to meet such a trial without friendly support. I believe even that had the rest of the Indians understood Portuguese and could have grasped the import of the insult, shame would have come to my young friend's aid and would have stiffened his courage to some show of resentment.

As it was, alas. The ascendancy of that other who had dominated him in the past was too strong for him. He did indeed—so the woman stealer told me—half stride forward for a moment with fire in his eyes. But the utterly careless scorn of that Joaquim brought him to hesitation; and complete subjection was, of course, the next immediate step. He lowered his eyes, and his hands dropped weakly to his sides, and he shuffled away.

What was the natural outcome? In the upper rivers the old law holds, "He shall have who can take." This Joaquim found a nice little hammock business ready to his hand. My friend had been busy. He had traveled afar among all the river villages and had persuaded whole families to set to work on hammocks—on no more than his word, of course.

It was an indication of his rare ability to control Indians that he had persuaded them to labor on his mere promise of payment upon my return with his goods. But to hold those same Indians before he had furnished proof of his straight dealing—and against a rival who had actual goods wherewith to pay—would have been a miracle.

So this Joaquim circulated among the settlements and told the Indians that the other white man—meaning me—was dead; and that in my place came he. And in proof of it he brought, of course, the goods that had been promised; knives and beads and mirrors and all manner of shiny things.

What Indian could resist such? Had my unfortunate friend but once lived up to his bargain, there was no doubt that he could have held them for the future against all competitors, even as I felt secure about my feathers with those Casiquiare tribes. But as it was, they traded the hammocks readily with Joaquim. And he, he came every evening to the little landing to display his stealings to the Periguiça and to spend a pleasant hour or so jeering at him and showing what a fool he was making of him before his own Indians.

After which he would go across the river and make camp in a little glade on that shore. For this Joaquim was no real hero, and he felt a nervous suspicion that my friend might yet muster up courage enough to incite the Indians against him.

The whole circumstance was very unfortunate indeed and an ill trick of fate. I do not blame my unhappy friend. The trial was too sudden. It took him with the disadvantage of surprize, and it was too severe to face alone and unaided.

What, again, was the natural outcome? The laws hold in the upper jungles just as

surely as in the cities; and it is my observation that when a man's spirit is sick with adversity—be his skin white or brown—his mood is ripe to listen to the spiritual doctors. As it is also my observation that the type of mind which feels the call to be a spirit doctor—be he a good *padre* of the mission or a painted savage *ipagé*—feels also the urge to control the minds of other people.

So there came to the unfortunate in his trouble the *ipagé*. A shrewd and a cunning controller of tribal destinies. And he made the customary talk of all the healers. In effect:

"Look," he said, "of yourself you are not strong enough to overcome the evil that has befallen you. That white man has made a fool out of you before all the people and has stolen away your goods. Appeal, therefore, to the *Jurupari*, whose servant I am; and by my magics which I will make I will drive away this man from here."

Senhor, to you this may sound fantastic talk to tell to a white man. But how do the spirit healers control except by understanding men's minds? Consider the case.

The man had left his own people, crushed and cast out by them. He had come among a kindly and a friendly folk and had lived isolated among them for two years. Some of their ideas he must have absorbed. Some of the undoubted magics of their witch doctors he must have observed. Further, he was in great trouble. What more natural than that he should say to the *ipagé:*

"Well, go ahead. For my part I can not lose by it; and if you can magic my enemy away from here you are a greater magician than I have given you credit for."

SO THE *ipagé* chuckled to himself and set about preparing a great magic strong enough to fall upon a white man, who as a rule are not easily affected by witchcraft. For two days he beat upon a wooden drum, and for two nights he rattled upon a gourd rattle and howled; and on the third day he painted red circles of the *genipa* juice round his eyes and vested himself in all his vestments of skins and skulls and feathers, and sent for the white man.

"Look," he said to his near convert, "that place where your enemy now camps is not favorable to the *Jurupari* because the sun at midday falls full upon it. Do you, therefore, carry out faithfully the instructions that I now give you; and my magics will, within three more days, drive your enemy away from that place to another place where the sun does not fall; and the *Jurupari* will then first make him sick with a wasting sickness and will presently kill him."

Well, what would a man do in the circumstances who was already almost half believing something of the powers of the witch doctors? Skeptical he might be; but desperate he was also; and at the worst he could not lose any further. So he took the magics of the *ipagé*, which were fantastic enough. The entrails of a chicken and an unborn monkey and such clap-trap, all steeped in a foul-smelling broth of certain herbs.

"Listen," said the *ipagé*. "You will go by night and you will place these, half at the upper side of the camp of your enemy, where the *Jurupari*, traveling down with the stream, will see them and know them; and half at the lower side of the camp, where the *Jurupari*, traveling up with the wind, will see them and draw strength."

It is indicative of the power that the crafty old *ipagé* was beginning to exercise over the man that he took all these charms and went. In the third hour after midnight, when men sleep soundest, he took a dugout *ubá* and paddled across the river.

It is indicative, too, of the cunning woodcraft that he had learned during those years among the Indians that he was able to place the magic mess as directed; and indicative yet further of the courage that his desperation had given him that he dared to do it at all. For in that country of the poisoned blow gun a sleeper does not wait to ask, "*Quien es?*" when he hears footsteps prowling round his camp at night. The rule of the upper rivers is not to come to a camp by night. Or, if one must, to carry a lantern and to shout aloud to herald one's coming.

But the Periguiça succeeded in planting his magics without mishap. Naked he went like any other Indian, so that there would be no dragging even of a loin cloth among the bushes; and as silently as the very best of the hunters of the tribe. At the north and the south of the little glade he

placed the —— brew; and neither Joaquim nor his dull-headed down-river Indians heard sound or stir, though the upper deposit was within half a dozen meters of his tent. For this Joaquim, believe me or not, was one of those luxurious peddlers among the rubber camps who carried a tent to sleep in.

So the Periguiça returned and reported all that he had done, and the witch doctor said:

"Good, *ipangu*—" by which he meant, warrior of the tribe, as distinct from "*kariwa*," white man—"wait now for three days and see the magic of the *Jurupari* work its magic."

And *ipangu*, my unfortunate friend let himself be called; and he sat him down to wait, half skeptical yet half believing.

And on the third day, *miravel*, the miracle happened!

Watching eagerly from the farther shore, while the *ipagé* burned things that stank and muttered incantations and turned his eyes into his head in trance, he saw his enemy gather up his gear and strike his tent and load it all into his *batelão* and move down river to another glade where tall trees with a thick rubbery leaf threw a shade over the clearing.

It was then that the old *ipagé* chuckled and swelled his shriveled chest and said:

"Ho-ho, did I not tell you, *ipangu*? The third day comes and he goes, as I said it would be. Great is my magic and powerful is the *Jurupari* whom I serve. Wait yet three days—or maybe one or two more, for those white men are hard to bewitch—and you will see him sicken; and then in three times as many days the *Jurupari* will kill him, and you will be free from your enemy. Afterward you will pay me what I ask, when that other white man, your friend, comes up river again."

And it was then that the once white man became, *ipangu*, indeed in his own mind. Of all the white men he had ever known there was but one—myself—who did not persecute him and make a fool out of him; and of all the Indians there no one who did not befriend him. And now this witch doctor was delivering him from a persecution which even I, whom he had regarded as all-powerful in the upper rivers, had not been able to prevent.

What blame that he turned from his useless early teachings and trusted in the power of the old *ipagé*? Even though the third day came and his enemy still traveled among the Indians stealing his hammocks. For the *ipagé* said:

"Wait, *ipangu*. Give me yet a little time, for he is a white man. Let me make my strongest death magic."

And he shut himself up in his hut which was built like a jaguar trap, and planted his carved stick before the door to represent himself; which signified that no one might enter, and that all messages must be spoken to the stick; and from within he emitted groans and stinks and heavy smokes; and in the morning and in the evening he called once to his convert who waited in attendance:

"Does he walk abroad, Ipangu? Does he sicken?"

"Not yet, O Stick of a Great Wizard," answered the convert. "He still steals my goods and laughs his way among the people."

So the wizard groaned yet louder and blew upon the dread *Jurupari* horn for another day or two; and at last the watcher answered to the evening inquiry:

"Today, O Stick, he has not gone abroad. He has sat outside his tent and remained quiet."

And the wizard howled from within and emitted a pandemonium of ghost noises and cried:

"Wait! Wait but a little, *ipangu*! The *Jurupari* has put his mark upon him. I see it. I see the sickness that eats his breath. I see the death that sits in the trees waiting to leap upon him. Tomorrow, *ipangu*. Watch him well tomorrow."

And on the morrow, in reply to the evening inquiry, the watcher replied:

"O Great Stick of the greatest of all Wizards, this day he has stayed within his tent all day; and his people, too, have taken the *batelão* out into the stream, and go ashore only to carry food to him."

So the *ipagé* shouted in praise of the *Jurupari* who was all-powerful and well disposed to his servant. And he made a *fiesta* of noises of triumph which he kept up unabated till the long, weird shrieks of the *quahee* bird announced that dusk had gone and night had come. Then he emerged at last from his long magic-making.

Having demonstrated to the final most exacting limit the power of his witchcraft, his ascendency over his convert was complete. He felt it was safe time now to begin

to tell what was in his mind about the payment for all his labors.

"When the other white man, your friend, comes, *ipangu*," he said, "you shall tell him that you have urgent need of a cooking pot of the kind that does not break; and perhaps—if the man dies quickly—a little salt for a present."

Small payment enough for the astounding feat of magicing a man to death. The moderation of the fee, was, in fact, almost as astounding as the feat. Much more remarkable to my mind than the fact that this white man should have adopted, first the habits, and then the dress, and finally the beliefs of the Indians among whom he lived. Why should he not? All his upbringing and his environment had driven him in that direction. The last of his racial differences had been purged from him, and he was now a full Indian.

THEN I came. And it was time. To find a fine new *batelão* tied up near the opposite bank was no surprize to me; for news of this other white man's had met me at every turn of the river. But to find my unfortunate friend, of whom I had expected so much when I last came away, now a convert to black magic and under the thumb of a witch doctor was a shock.

Naked but for his bark cloth girdle and head band, and tanned brown and hard, he squatted before me like any other Indian. Except that, had he been an Indian with an Indian's courage and his own muscles, he would long ago have been a chief. Yet I saw hope for him still in the fact that he was sorely ashamed when he came to my boat and told me the tale of all these doings. Much more ashamed, indeed, of his cowardice before the Joaquim, who had made such a fool out of him, than of his subservience to the witch doctor. The latter he defended.

"But *amigo* Theophilo," he insisted, "I have seen. Here is the proof which you can see for yourself. As he promised, so has he done by his witchcraft. Had it been but the once, I would have said, perhaps it is a chance. But having driven the man from the one place by his magic, he is now just as surely killing him by his magic."

In indignation I retorted.

"*Nom diabo*, the fellow surely needs killing for the things which he has done to you. But a whole man, even though only an Indian, does his own killing."

To which his only reply was—

"Yes—but——"

And he lowered his eyes and shifted his big frame in discomfort before my scorn. Which I noted with great joy; for this was tremendous advance. There had been a time when he admitted his pusillanimity without shame, as a thing which he could not help; and it was only the scorn that people heaped upon him that hurt. Now he felt shame at last for that he had given reason for scorn.

Yet the law makes no exceptions. So there was a penalty as well as an advance. As his courage seemed to be growing in association with courageous men; so his sense, for lack of stimulus, seemed to be dulling to their own simple level where even a witch doctor could make a fool of him and twist him round to serve his needs. If I would save my friend, it was necessary to show his little mind to himself, as naked as his great body.

"Look," I said to him,"you have admitted that an Indian should have greater courage than you because he has been brought up in the midst of greater dangers. But as to the common sense——"

But he interrupted me to argue the matter.

"No," he said. "That used to be. Now I can go where the Indians go and do whatever the Indians do. I hold my own with them. It is only a matter of usage."

Whereupon I snapped back at him.

"Good. Make it, then, a matter of usage to hold your own with white men also."

To which his reply, while his face twisted with pain, was again—

"Yes—but——"

I laughed at him.

"So-ho," I said. "In courage you claim to be now at least the equal of an Indian—as also in intelligence."

But his spirit rebelled at that.

"No!" he cried swiftly. "By no means. I am a white man and have my white man's superior intelligence. Were I inferior to these Indians, excellent people though they are and the only ones who have never bescorned nor befooled me, I should be in poor case indeed."

Here was encouragement again. So I struck swiftly.

"So?" I said with derision. "You can

do whatever the Indians do and you have, besides, your white man's superior intelligence, and these people have never befooled you? So indeed? Look you now, my friend. If you have but a little courage, as much as an Indian, to do the thing that I tell you to do, I will show you also how little sense you have, no more than an Indian. Answer me, then— Have you courage enough to go across the river to your enemy's camp while he is sick and bring me a branch of one of those trees which shade his tent?"

And he said—

"That thing an Indian would not do; for the *Juruparí* is there. Yet I will do it."

And he went boldly, without hesitation, and paddled across in his *ubá*, handling the craft through the currents with great strokes as skilfully as any other naked Indian and twice as strongly. The down-river men from Joaquim's *batelão* jabbered at him; but he paid no attention to them. Instead, he stepped quietly ashore and strode past the tent without a word and cut a low branch with his machete. Then as swiftly and surely as he had gone, he came back and gave the branch to me.

"Good," I said to him. "In bodily capabilities I see you have grown indeed. But now let me show you how small your mind has become."

And I crushed some of the thick gummy leaves of that tree with my machete blade against the split palm deck of my *batelão* and gave them to him to smell.

"Smell hard," I said to him. "And tell me how you feel."

He did so, wondering; and—

"Pah!" he spat. "Sick at the stomach they make me feel and heavy in the head."

"Good," I laughed. "Now listen to me, white man of the superior intelligence. That crafty old witch doctor has two hundred times as much intelligence as you; for he has twisted you round his little finger like a fool. By witchcraft he said he would drive your enemy from that first camp; and he gave you guts and clap-traps which you must place in the sun to draw his magics with? Fool.

"Any one of the Indians, your friends, who are not so foolish, could have told you that the juice of the *inga-shipo* rots things quickly and draws, not magic, but the *borua* flies that sting and lay their eggs in the flesh of a man's back or in his leg."

At that he opened his eyes and gasped, and the hot blood rose to his neck. But he muttered:

"Well, and if so, that does not explain away the magic of making a man sick in another place half a mile from there."

So I laughed again loudly; and:

"Double fool," I derided him. "Look across at that bank over there as far as you can see. What other open place is there where a man might pitch his tent except that one which is shaded by those trees? Trees in which the *Juruparí* might sit and work his magic. Ho-ho, simple one. Any Indian except a down-river Indian could have told you that these were *Juruparí* trees indeed by name as well as by evil effect. But, being Indians as simple as yourself, they would ascribe the evil to the power of the *Juruparí*.

"Yet any white man who knows the upper rivers—as well as any witch doctor who is as clever as a white man—could tell you that a man sleeping under those trees at night, when all trees shed their vapors, would presently suffer from heaviness of the head and listlessness which would keep him sick abed. That it would ever kill the man, I do not believe. Yet I know from my own experience before I learned the ways of the river that—ho ho!—that he must have the very ——'s own headache.

"Now, what do you say to all that magic, you of the superior intelligence? Let me tell you, *ipangu*, that even now your witch doctor, as well as all his lesser assistants, are laughing at you. Tell me now whether they have ever made a fool out of you?"

And this time he had no answer to give me at all. He sat very still and silent, except that his great fist opened and closed repeatedly on his knee so that the knuckles showed white under the brown tan, and his eyes glowed somber and angry into the distance of the otner shore.

AND so I judged it best to leave him. I stepped ashore and went visiting in the village. I took a small present to the chief and chewed through the *ipadú* ceremony with him, and laughing, told him that his *ipagú* was a very great scoundrel. But the chief clapped his hand over his mouth so that such sacrilege might not enter his body and mumbled

through his fingers that, no indeed, the *ipagú* was a very great wizard. And I laughed again and said:

"That word I take back, O Chief. I was wrong. He is a very clever and a cunning necromancer, and you may tell him that the white man compliments him."

With that the talk turned to tales of the old man's past prowess, each more wonderful than the last; and from that, to the inevitable discussion of the weather and the fishing and the *mandioca* crop and the hunting; and so on, far into the night.

When I returned to my *batelão* my friend still sat there, motionless almost as I had left him. He rose stiffly at my coming and said:

"Amigo, with your permission I will sling me a hammock in your boat. I do not wish to return tonight among the Indians."

So I humored him and worried him with no foolish questions. It was enough for me to see that he had thought much. With but few words between us I went to sleep. And in the morning I was awakened by the soft bump of an *ubá* against the side of my boat. My friend, with stern face and somber look, was preparing to get into it.

"What are you proposing to do?" I asked him.

And he said.

"The whole of what I am going to do I do not know yet. But watch me, my good friend and guide, and tell me if I do well."

And with that he paddled swiftly across the river. Straight to the *batelão* he went and climbed on board. From where I sat I could hear the sound of his angry voice raised, giving orders, and the answering jabber of those down-river Indians. Then presently without more ado I saw him give a shove with his great arm to the loudest talker so that the man fell into the water. Two others he beat toward the rope that tied the boat to its anchor stone; and the others without further argument took up their paddles.

To the bank I saw the boat go, and heard more angry orders. And then the crew all piled ashore; and while some carried their sick master to the boat, the others struck the tent and collected the gear; and then the boat came back across river and tied up alongside of mine. My friend was still silent and stern.

"What now?" I asked him.

And he replied with another question.

"Was it well?"

"Yes," I told him. "It was well done. But those were only Indians, and down-river Indians at that. What of the man?"

And he answered, troubled.

"I do not know. But do me the favor, *amigo*. Nurse me this man well. Till then I keep away from here. After then—I do not know. I must think. Do you advise me what to do; and send me word when he is well."

So I told him that assuredly I would attend to the man. That it would not be a matter of more than a couple of days or so. A good physic and an *aspirina* and clean air were all that was needed to put him on his feet. And he thanked me and went away from there with his head bowed on his chest and with long strides that trampled everything, unseeing, underfoot.

I knew that a mighty battle was about to take place between his fears and his manhood; and I did not envy him that fight. But it was his own to win or lose. I could not help him, nor any other man.

In three days I sent him word to say that Joaquim was as well and as braggart as ever, and he should come and make his stand, now or never. But I gave him no advice as to what he should do. Better, I thought, that he should make his own decisions and stand on his own feet.

He came in answer to the summons, swiftly. Which was a good sign; for I had feared hesitation. But it was evident in his demeanor that he had fought his battle and had made his decision, whatever it might be; and that, what was more, he had steeled himself to carry it out.

ON the deck of my boat we were sitting; and he climbed on board and squatted before us, naked as he was, and saying no word, his expression more than ever that of an angry jungle cat's. This should have been a warning to Joaquim. Anybody but a fool should have seen that this was a change indeed from the periguiça whom he had known. But Joaquim was always a fool blinded by the folly of his own conceit. His greeting was one of braggart hilarity.

"Ohé, my good Periguiça," he chuckled. "I find I have to thank you for the small service of bringing me away from that place of stinks. Who would ever have thought of such a thing?"

To which my friend replied, speaking only to me—

"I have beaten the witch doctor."

My heart leaped within me at the thought and all that it meant. But I said only:

"*Tcha-tcha*, that was not well done, *amigo*. An up-river man must by all means keep friends with the witch doctors."

And Joaquim added, fatuous still in his folly:

"What? The Periguiça has beaten a man? *Quê maravell* Ho, ho, what will happen next? Truly, my good Periguiça, you improve in the jungles."

Then at last the Periguiça spoke to him, deeply in his belly, growling without moving.

"Do not use that name again."

That was all. The surprize of such a brusk order from such a source was sufficient almost to throw the Joaquim off the bale of print goods upon which he sat. But after a gasp or two and a stutter of amazement his anger came to him.

"*Quê caralhos*, fellow," he snarled. "You speak to me like that and I rip your liver out."

And he made the sign with his hand which among us means the ultimate insult.

My friend's reply was as sudden as the jungle cat's. He shot a great paw out and gripped the insulting hand as it made its circle in the air. Without any word he just applied pressure and crushed it till Joaquim screamed with surprize and pain and snatched with his free hand for the knife in his sash belt.

The other, still squatting on his haunches, and without effort, twisted the arm that he held till the elbow became stiff; and, using this as a lever, turned and thrust Joaquim off from his bale so that he rolled on the deck. There he held him at his mercy.

Then at last came to Joaquim the realization of the man's strength. And the rage which had leaped into his eyes at the insult gave place to wonder, and the wonder to fear. As well it might be. For, *carramba*, that naked figure squatting there with the sun on his bronze muscles showed power and a fierce suppressed anger. A very coldly dangerous man he looked to be.

For Joaquim, of course, that was enough. These braggarts are never great doers. He whimpered something about his hurt; and as for me, I didn't blame him; for the sudden realization had come to him that this man whom he had so tormented and wronged could lift him up and break him in two.

As the whimper rose to a squeal, the other pushed him from him with the stiff arm; and Joaquim rolled over and over and was then wise enough to lie where he arrived on the deck. My friend turned his face toward me, stern and without elation.

"Was it well done, my friend?" he asked.

I fell upon him and embraced him.

"*Amigo mio!*" I cried. "It was well and a hundred times well done. Now at last you have shown yourself a white man able to hold your own against a white man. Let it become a matter of usage."

And I embraced him again in the fullness of my heart.

But he withdrew himself from my embrace, cold and stern as ever.

"Yes," he said. "I am a white man. I have thought much with myself, and I have seen much within myself. A white man am I of whole white parents. Not with the Indians will I live, but with white men. Tell me then, my friend and adviser, what must I now do?"

But I answered him quickly.

"Nay, my friend. You are a white man of the light haired peoples. Make up your own decisions as a whole white man should."

So he thought a while—just a little. And then he announced his findings.

"This, then, is my decision." He turned to Joaquim who still sat upon the deck rubbing his elbow and weeping with useless rage. "You Joaquim— For all the things that you have done to me all my life and yours; and for all the harm you have done me among my people here; and for all my hammocks which you have stolen—for all these things I should kill you with my two hands.

"But I am not accustomed to killing—as yet. So all that I do is to take back my hammocks which are rightfully my business built up by me. And in return for your life which I do not take, I confiscate only your boat, which I need to carry on my business."

And he turned to me to ask once more:

"Is it fair? Is it well done, my friend?"

"A hundred times fair," I told him readily. "By the rule of the river a man who steals the business of an up-river trader forfeits his life. You do well by him."

"Yes," he said with conviction. "I am an up-river trader. My business is to sell the hammocks of my Indians to the shops

in Manaos. I return down river with you, *amigo* Theophilo, in my own boat—if you will lend me some white man's clothes."

But at that Joaquim raised a howl on the deck and cried out that he would die up there among the Indians, and, *Madre Deus*, we could not leave him there to die. But my friend told him fiercely to shut up and added:

"This I will do for you. I will give you a dugout canoe; a good one, made by myself when I was an Indian; big enough for you and your crew of six men. And I will give you food from my boat such as you may need for your journey down river. It is enough. I, whom you used to call by that name which you will never use again, came up river in a canoe big enough for one man, without food and without a crew. Go, swiftly, and tell them that I am coming."

SO THAT was the end of that matter. What more is there to tell? We went together, my friend and I, to collect my feathers; and on the journey up I showed him all that I knew about the management of a *batelão*, and helped him to train his crew which he picked from among his people. And then we journeyed down river again, he with a more profitable cargo than I.

Without event of any sort we traveled down river back to civilization. My friend, silent and stern as ever, thinking long thoughts as he sat at the steering paddle of his boat and looking at nothing through his morose eyes. I, wondering how would transpire the first meetings with other men who might not be so easily cowed as that braggart Joaquim. For among the rubber gatherers were men whom even an up-river man might respect without shame to himself.

But my fears were needless. Out of the jungle had come health and strength and consequent confidence to my big young friend. We arrived in due course at the first of the rubber settlements; and there a man known to both of us of old came alongside.

"Hola, Theophilo," he called. "*Como vae?*"

And he climbed by his ill fate onto my friend's boat, thinking it to be one of mine. There, after the first gape of astonishment, came recognition and the amusement which he thought was his right.

"*Mira então!*" he cried. "Look, then, whom we meet! Dom Periguiça of all people, whom we thought to be dead. He-he, where did you pick him up, Theophilo?"

The man was something of a fool too; else surely would that somber face with the jungle cat eyes have been a warning. But he laughed lightly and paid no further attention to it, turning to call me again. But as he turned, my friend made a long stride and gripped the man by the shoulder.

Astonished, he tried to twist himself round to see what this amazing thing might be, and wrenched to free his shoulder, snarling with rage:

"Nails of the ——! Let me go, you crazy Periguiça, before I kill you."

But that one great arm was as strong as the whole of the man's body. With one move my friend twisted his hip under the man's belly and threw him in a single heave clear ten feet with arms and legs flying into the river. Then as he came up spluttering and mouthing threats of death, the Periguiça who used to be told him coldly:

"You mispronounced, my friend. My name is *Perigoso*."

And, *caramba*, *Perigoso* he looked, standing there with his feet wide apart and his big shoulders hunched forward, the chest showing through the rent where my thin coat had ripped with the effort, and his face dark and unsmiling with the light of the jungle cat in his angry eyes. A dangerous man indeed.

So that the rubber man, as he swam and looked, changed his mind; and muttering, "*Valgame Deus*," he climbed into his own canoe and paddled swiftly ashore without further offense.

That story spread, of course; as did other similar ones. For there were many such lessons to be dealt out and many hard men to be disillusioned. How many rash would-be bravos my friend threw into the river I never knew. But the time was surprizingly short before men forgot that other name and, Dom Perigoso—the dangerous one—he was called in all the water fronts.

So there is the tale, senhor. What manner of man he went into the jungle and what manner of whole man he came out, I have told you. Judge, then, for yourself whether he knows the rivers and the jungles, and whether he is a fit man to be entrusted with your safety. As for me, I would recommend you to him as readily as to myself. *Então*, it is enough, no?

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

CONCERNING dog-meat. Something from F. W. Hodge of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation:

New York.

Apropos of Mr. Huston's article, "Skookum Chuck," in the December 30th issue, many an old-timer and a good many newtimers as well, will not agree with his assumption that none of the buffalo Indians ate dog except on ceremonial or state occasions.

THE late James Mooney, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, informed me some years ago that, while making a study of the Ghost Dance of the Sioux (he spent considerable time at Wounded Knee after the massacre of 1890), he lived for a good while in a tipi with a Sioux family, with whom he had been long on intimate terms. Among the family members was a puppy, with which Mooney was fond of romping in the evenings. At the close of one day's work he returned "home," ate dinner with the family, looked around for the pup, as usual, and, missing it, inquired where it was.

Answered the lady of the tipi, "Why, you have just eaten it!"

The meal was in no wise a ceremonial affair—it was just like dozens of others Mooney had eaten with the same family, and he would not have known that he had feasted on dog-meat had he not missed his evening playmate. Further inquiry showed that the reason for eating the dog was that the family had run short of other meat that day and that the dog was consumed as a matter of course.

MR. HUSTON makes the sweeping statement that dog was not an article of diet by any Indians, since he seems to be writing of all the redmen from the Cocopa to the Sioux, but saves his face in the same breath by saying that dogs were not commonly eaten "as far as the buffalo Indians were concerned." I have personal knowledge of one tribe of New Mexico that consumed practically every dog they possessed during one winter a few years ago, following a shortage of crops—and there was no ceremony about it. As a matter of fact, few Indians would not eat dog-meat when they had a chance. The chief deterrent was its high value for many purposes.

Incidentally, I have known many frontiersmen to call all male Indians "bucks," but I have yet to see one of these who was ever on terms sufficiently intimate to enable him to "get under the skin" of an Indian.

"Believe me, I *know*!"—F. W. HODGE, Museum of the American Indian.

SOMETHING from William Byron Mowery on the actual history back of his novelette in this issue:

Austin, Texas.

"*Tyro and Tyrant*" is based upon the tumultuous times of the Russo-American Fur Co. about the year 1818. The big historical fact, out of which my story arises, is Baranof's being supplanted as Chief Manager by Captain Hagemeister who was unable to cope with the problems and resigned in favor of his lieutenant, Yanovsky.

YANOVSKY'S romance with Baranof's daughter had a great deal more prominence in fact than I have given it in fiction. Indeed, it was largely this romance, and her strategic position (barely hinted at in the story) which made Hagemeister turn the power over to his little-known but none-the-less able lieutenant.

Hagemeister usually gets a more considerate treatment than I have given him. This circumstance is due, I think, to the fact that Captain Golovnin, a personal friend of Hagemeister's, wrote the best and almost the only account of the latter's tenure of office. This account is clearly prejudiced. The big fact of Hagemeister's inability and resignation remains.

All the troubles I have mentioned have definite bases in the records; but I have made them more climactic than they actually were; that is, have focussed them upon one definite time in order to show with the utmost clearness and emphasis just why Hagemeister should turn over his proud position to his subordinate.

I hope I have preserved the essential truth of the real historical happening and *milieu*. However, it would surprise me if some few of the minor points are not open to dispute. *Auctores inter se different.* As one example of the welter of contradiction, three authorities give three different dates for Hagemeister's resignation. All three presumably took their material from the same archives at Sitka. I had my pick of four different Christian names for Yanovsky, who is mentioned often and always in hearty praise but usually as "the lieutenant."—WM. BYRON MOWERY.

THE clipping sent by Comrade Warwick was an article by Edward H. Smith in the San Francisco *Chronicle* of May 4, 1924. The effectiveness of the Iowa plan is, of course, absolutely dependent upon a citizenry possessing firearms and skilled in their use. The anti-weapon law would soon make it impossible, even in the direst emergency, to find citizens who had and could use firearms.

No one knows how dire that emergency might be. The man who hoots at a Red attempt at armed violence in this country is hooting without knowledge. It is very clearly established that they have both desire and intention. Any permanent success for such an attempt is extremely improbable—in this day and year. Five, ten, twenty-five years from now it may be another story; our world has changed a good deal in the last twenty-five years, even in the last ten, and it is still changing, very rapidly.

What a hoot there would have been in 1913 at the idea of an executed Czar, of Russian ruled even half a dozen years by the proletariat under a kind of government thitherto unknown to the world! Germany a republic, the Kaiser an exile. The map of Europe made over again—old countries cut to pieces, new ones created. To say nothing of the war itself—*how* most people did hoot at the idea of there ever being another big war! And not to mention chemical warfare, tanks, developed airplanes and submarines, radio and a host of other inventions. And the vast changes in the temper and viewpoints of people.

The coming twenty-five, or ten, years will bring us equally surprising changes, for we have developed the habit of change and the world is still in ferment. Who can tell what inventions will change civilization's methods, what wars and revolutions will come, what further political upheavals are in store for us?

BUT at present no permanent success for the Reds seems possible in this country? But how about temporary ones—by way of propaganda, demonstration, trying things out or as futile efforts for permanent success? If you think there is no possibility of such attempts, the police and secret service can, if they will, make you open your eyes. If you think such attempts couldn't gain even temporary success, ask military authorities how many organized men it would take to seize your town or city over night and hold it long enough to produce red ruin, to destroy it if they couldn't hold it? And ask them whether the revolutionaries wouldn't get a lot farther and last a lot longer if the citizenry were entirely without weapons and untrained in the use of them.

NO ONE has yet been able to locate the source of all the money backing the anti-weapon campaign. Maybe the Reds are not contributing to its funds and aiding in its propaganda. There is, however, no proof that they are not. And one thing is sure—they will rejoice if the body of our citizenry, who are the law-abiding element, are deprived of weapons. The Reds, of course, like the criminals, will have plenty of weapons, just as New York crooks after years of the Sullivan law have plenty of weapons today. An anti-weapon law will make it vastly easier for a few armed, organized men to seize control and hold many times their number helpless.

The army and police? Of course—eventually. But even a few hours' control of a city is enough to destroy it. And, during

the next twenty-five years, how long can we be sure the Reds are not secretly in control of the army at least to the extent of having wormed into it enough of their men to make it an uncertain weapon? That is their method, you know.

All moonshine and poppycock? So were the World War and Soviet Russia—in 1913. You said so yourself. All moonshine? Prove it is! With proof, not with optimistic opinions founded on nothing whatever except that it hasn't happened—yet.

Oakland, California.

I have long desired to do my little bit in the campaign against the fire-arms "outrage" which seems to be getting nearer and nearer to enactment as a law all the time. Consequently I thought that bringing the enclosed clipping to your attention might help first by showing some practical results of our alternative of the fire-arms bill and second by giving a fresh impetus to the arguments against the obnoxious legislation. Said arguments seem to have settled into a sort of rut that bids fair to defeat their purpose. Every one is repeating the one line of reasoning over and over and, though a strong line, much usage will weaken its effectiveness.

Fifteen cents of the first three dollars I ever earned went to buy a copy of *Adventure*. That was one-twentieth of my weekly salary in 1912 when I was 14. That ought to serve as credentials.—A. WARWICK.

How Iowa Reduced Bank Holdups to a Minimum

By Edward H. Smith

(*From S. F.* Chronicle, *May 4, Sunday.*)

To find out what measures ought to be taken and what other communities are doing, I took the question, the other day, to R. A. Algire, one of the foremost American experts on burglary and holdup risks. Mr. Algire is vice-president and superintendent of the burglary department of the National Surety Company and a member of the governing committee of the burglary department, National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters.

"There is no question," said Mr. Algire, "that something drastic must be done to cope with this menace. Our people must be made safe in their property and persons, at least to the extent of being able to conduct and patronize banks without fear of sudden death. As it stands now, both the officials and employes of banks and their customers are in constant danger. The latest raid out at Bellmore shows that the casual visitor is as likely to be shot down as the man behind the cage."

"What is this triumphant 'Iowa plan,' as it is called?"

"In its essentials," said the burglary expert, "the Iowa plan is nothing but an elaboration of the vigilante or constabulary idea, but these old methods of dealing with emergency criminal situations had to be developed and thoroughly organized. The Iowa Bankers' Association worked through the various county bankers' associations to the end of calling together vigilance committees in each of the ninety-nine Iowa counties. Today every county in Iowa has such a committee of citizens under command of the local Sheriff. Each county committee is again divided into groups located in every banking town. There are about forty vigilantes in the average county and as high as a hundred in the largest communities.

"TO GET the thing under way, Mr. Warner and the Iowa bankers got into communication with the War Department and, first under Mr. Baker and later under Mr. Weeks, procured permission to buy arms and ammunition from the Government. The rifles and revolvers thus obtained were distributed among the vigilance committees, two rifles to each group and a heavy military revolver to every man. In addition, each vigilante was made a member of the American Rifle Association and every man was bonded, to make sure of his responsibility and carefulness. Naturally, only the reliable kind of men were chosen and armed.

"The local county committee have been provided with high-powered automobiles, special armored cars, eccentric whistles and special colored lights by means of which pursuit parties can recognize one another by night, and even an airplane for scouting and pursuit work.

"THE result has been a ready and efficient instrument against the bank robbers. Instead of finding small towns in which there was often not a single effective weapon or a single citizen ready to put up a fight or carry on a pursuit, the robbers encountered swift and highly effective resistance and tenacious chase. They met men who could and did shoot. A number were killed. Many others were caught and sent to prison for long terms. They decided, as such criminals always will, that a State so organized was a poor field for their special talents. As a consequence the bank criminals have left Iowa and we have at last a State where the business of the people can be carried on safely.

"Such an organization should become Nation-wide without delay. If there were such vigilance committees all over New York State and in every ward of New York city these constant deadly raids would not happen. Neither would we have the repeated safe robberies and other commercial burglaries which are happening in this city night after night. I consider the Iowa plan the most effective weapon against major criminals yet devised in this country."

AN INTERESTING letter concerning the Custer fight, in answer to one at a former Camp-Fire from an Indian comrade. It is from a comrade who has already spoken on this subject:

I have once or twice before written you, attempting in my small way to keep history reasonably straight with regard to the battle of the Little Big Horn. I have explained that my only motive has been to prevent imposition upon the readers of *Adventure*, by whom "Camp-Fire" has been looked upon for years as a place in which to find odd but authentic bits of history concerning the Old West. But after reading the letter signed "Lone Eagle" in your

issue of Dec. 30, 1924, I am inclined to throw up my hands and to say—"what's the use?"

HOWEVER, since Mr. Lone Eagle has seen fit to question the accuracy of my letter which you published just a year ago, and in which I averred that there was no survivor of Custer's immediate command, and that every white alleged "witness" to the annihilation of his battalion who has so far appeared has been a palpable and easily proven faker, I suppose that it is up to me either to drop the subject or to justify my statement. I now reiterate it: Mr. Lone Eagle to the contrary notwithstanding.

While proceeding to the task, however, I desire to scan Mr. Eagle's letter to see how much of an effort is requisite to demonstrate who is in error. In so doing I wish it distinctly understood that I do not question his good faith. I am not only willing to think, but prefer to think, that he is entirely honest and believes that he is giving you facts. Yet his letter is about as misinforming as it could be.

THAT he is a Sioux Indian spells nothing. There were in 1876 thousands of Sioux Indians who knew nothing about the fight on the Little Big Horn; and there have been many more thousands since. The Sioux Nation as a whole was not concerned in the Little Big Horn campaign; but only that part of it known as the "non-treaty" Sioux, who united under Sitting Bull, the Huncpapa medicine man who up to the day of his death regarded the whites—and from his point of view, justifiedly—with a bitter and enduring hatred.

To Sitting Bull's band of "non-treaty" Sioux there were added a considerable number of "agency" Sioux; young men who had left the reservations and joined with him during the early months of 1876. But by no means did Sitting Bull's camp represent the whole Sioux Nation, or even the larger part of it. The mere fact that your correspondent is a Sioux is therefore without necessary significance.

MR. EAGLE refers to the Crow scout "Curley" as "Bloody Knife." Here, surely, is confusion worse confounded. There *was* an Indian scout whose name was Bloody Knife, and he was with the 7th Cavalry during the battle of the Little Big Horn; but he very certainly was not identical with Curley. Bloody Knife was, moreover, not a Crow, but an Arikara, or "Ree"; and he was killed at Major Reno's side just before the latter's battalion left the timber on the western side of the river to retreat to the hills upon the opposite side. Mr. Eagle says that Bloody Knife was "later commonly known as Curley;" but the Curley who died a year or two ago —the Crow scout who sometimes claimed to have gone into the fight with Custer, was known as Curley when the fight occurred, and he was always so known. His name appears as Curley in the contemporary records, of which the following is but one of numerous examples. I quote from the diary report of Sergeant Wilson of the Engineers, who, writing on board the *Far West* at the mouth of the Little Big Horn, June 28, 1876, says:

"An Indian scout named Curley, known to have been with General Custer, arrived about noon with information of a battle, but there being no interpreter on board, very little reliable information was obtained."

Evidently Curley had not then acquired the fluency in French and English attributed to him by Mr. Eagle. Nor had he acquired it a few years ago when a well known writer from Los Angeles visited him; and he had not acquired it when in 1919 he went over the entire field of the Little Big Horn with General Hugh Scott, one of the greatest living authorities on the western Indian, know far and wide as the personal friend of every Indian of consequence among the western tribes for half a century. On all of these occasions an interpreter was found indispensable.

BUT to get down to brass tacks as to Curley and his claims. Custer took with him from the Yellowstone some forty-odd Indian scouts. They were of two tribes, Arikara and Crow. Both were hereditary enemies of the Sioux, and that is the reason that they were willing to guide the troops—to see their ancient foe chastised. The leader of the Crows was Half Yellow Face and of the Rees, Bloody Knife. When the troops were some three miles from the river a dust cloud was observed over the valley, down stream, and Custer ordered Reno to cross over and attack, correctly assuming that the dust was raised by the Sioux. The Rees went with Reno, and the Crows also, except four, who were retained by Custer under "Mitch" Bouyer, a half-breed who was Custer's chief scout and interpreter. The four Crows thus retained by Custer were White Man Runs Him, Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead and Curley. Of these, Curley died about two years ago. White Man Runs Him was still living when I last heard of him. As to the other two I have no information whether they are alive or dead.

Before quoting from General Scott's interview with White Man Runs Him and Curley, which the general furnished me some two years ago, I wish to remark upon what Mr. Eagle says Curley told him. He says that he asked Curley "how he got over to the Indian side without being shot," and Curley replied "that the Indians were friendly to him as he did not know that they were about to encounter a camp of Sioux and Cheyennes." Even Mr. Eagle didn't believe that. He says so. And of course the utter absurdity of such a statement is so obvious as to make no comment necessary.

CURLEY'S early accounts of his experiences were in very careful detail as to how he went to Custer and tried to persuade him to escape, etc., and how he, Curley, after the last unsuccessful attempt to take Custer with him, wrapped himself in a Sioux blanket which he had taken from a dead warrior, caught a riderless Sioux pony, and *in disguise* wormed his way through the Sioux and incontinently beat it for a pleasanter and a safer place. If you desire to reprint Curley's stories from the original editions, so to speak, you will find them in the New York *Herald* of July 13 and July 26, 1876. But you will discover no mention in any of Curley's stories about remaining to call on his good friends Sitting Bull, Rain in the Face, Two Moon and Red Cloud; all of whom (except Red Cloud) would undoubtedly have been delighted to see him, he being an hereditary enemy who had just assisted in piloting white troops to attack and kill their people! If he made any social calls on Red Cloud, however, he did it a long time after the battle of the Little Big Horn, for Red Cloud at that time was back on the reservation some hundreds of miles away, it having been especially arranged by Colonel Mackenzie and

his cavalry that Mr. Cloud and his warriors should not go on the war-path that season.

Curley's friend Rain in the Face seems not to have remembered his visit very well, either. "Rain," in paying his respects to friend Curley said (*Outdoor Life*, March, 1903):

"I know Curley. He is a liar. He never was in the fight. . . . When he heard the firing he ran off like a whipped dog."

"Rain" seems to have been brutally frank in expressing his opinion of Curley's veracity.

ON AUGUST 24, 1919, General Hugh Scott, in company with White Man Runs Him and Curley, went all over the battlefield of the Little Big Horn. Mr. Russell White Bear of the Crow Agency acted as interpreter. At the place where Custer and Reno separated, on the south side of Reno Creek, White Man Runs Him said:

"Custer (at this point) called to Half Yellow Face and White Swan and told them to go over to the ridge and see if the Sioux camp was there. They started, but instead of going over to the ridge, they followed Reno, and that was the last we saw of them until the trouble was over. Then Custer started moving toward the ridge. Mitch Bouyer noticed the scouts Custer had sent to look over the ridge had followed Reno, so he (Bouyer) called me, Curley, Goes Ahead and Hairy Moccasin and said: 'Let us go over to the ridge and look at the lodges.' When we reached there we saw that the lodges were over in the valley quite a ways down the river, so we went on ahead, Custer following. . . . I went with Custer as far as Custer Creek and then came back with the other scouts."

CURLEY then said:

"Mitch Bouyer talked to the scouts and told us that Custer wanted Half Yellow Face and White Swan to go over the hill to the ridge and look over the camp. The two scouts were almost to the foot of the hill when the trumpeter sounded a call and the left wing started moving. That was Reno who moved. The scouts turned to the left and joined Reno. . . . Mitch Bouyer said: 'Come on; we will go up on the hill and look over.' So Mitch Bouyer and we four Crows started up the hill on a gallop and when we looked back from the top of the hill Custer had moved on and Reno had crossed the river. . . . We scouts followed Custer. We galloped our horses and moved fast after Custer and his men. Custer went to a point on the ridge and then turned to the right and followed a coulee down in a northerly direction. When Custer left, Mitch Bouyer and we scouts remained on the point. . . . There were five of us altogether. We went further north on the high bluffs and came near the Indian camp just below the bluffs. Each of us fired two or three shots at the camp. Custer had reached the river when we were at this point on the bluffs. The Indians commenced moving as soon as Custer reached the river. Then Mitch Bouyer said he was going down to Custer and his men and for the rest of us to go back to the pack outfit. . . . We came back . . . Things looked bad, so we thought we had better hunt safety. We then turned and followed the ridge going toward the Rosebud. I left the others and traveled toward the mouth of Reno Creek in a southwest direction. . . . After traveling as far as where Custer had crossed Reno Creek to go on the ridge, I turned up Reno Creek (east) toward the buttes and met the pack-train. They went on through and that was the last I saw of them. . . . *From the butte above where I met the pack outfit I went on down to the mouth of the Little Horn.*"

WHITE MAN RUNS HIM then continued:

"If it wasn't for Mitch Bouyer most likely I would be there with Custer, buried; but Mitch Bouyer told us to go back. There were only three of us then, Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead and myself. We did not see Curley. Mitch Bouyer told us to go back. He said: 'You go back to the pack-train and let the soldiers fight.' We went back and met some soldiers and soon after that the pack-train was there. If those soldiers hadn't turned back . . . they would all have been killed. Curley would have been one of the live ones . . . *Curley left us up on Reno Creek.* I do not like to quarrel with Curley, but that is the truth."

Curley came near to speaking the truth that day. He was telling his story in the presence of one of the scouts who was with him on June 25, 1876, and who *knew* the truth; and he was telling it to a man who was known to every Indian of the Plains as one to whom it was difficult to tell anything but the truth.

I think the foregoing disposes quite thoroughly of Curley and the fanciful tales he was prone to relate to the gullible. His "survivor" stories were discredited long ago; and to General Scott he made no pretense of having even seen the fight, much less of having been in it. So much for Curley.

NEXT, as to the number of Indians and tepees. Mr. Eagle says there were about five hundred tepees and about 2500 Sioux. I can not take the time to go over all the testimony; but there are many men yet living who saw the village, both standing and moving, and who went over the ground it had occupied. It covered a space between three and four miles in length, and was at some points more than a quarter of a mile deep. There were counted more than 1500 tepees and several hundred wikiups.

Feather Earring, a Minneconjou who took part in the battle, in talking with General Scott about it, in answer to the General's question as to the number of lodges, said:

"There were very many; three and four young men in a lodge. We gave each man a willow stick in order to count them. I know we counted over five thousand, and they were not all there; many were over in Arrow Creek stealing horses from the Crows."

I suspect that Mr. Eagle intended to write 1500 instead of 500. The women and children had to live somewhere, and there were a great many of them. The village was not exclusively warriors.

MR. EAGLE says he has a broken sword at his ranch in Montana that was taken by his foster-father at the battle of June 25, 1876. Yet it is well known that the 7th Cavalry carried no sabers whatever. Sabers, being a useless encumbrance in Indian fighting, were taboo in Indian campaigns. Lieut. Wallace, testifying before the Reno Court of Inquiry in 1879, in describing how the troops were armed, said: "*There was not a saber in the command;* they had revolvers and carbines."

Mr. Eagle says that "every trooper and civilian in Custer's band was scalped except one, and that was General Geo. A. Custer; and two reasons were

accountable for his scalp not being taken. First, his known courage and bravery was respected by the Indians, and also that they were superstitious about taking long curly red hair."

Well, as to the "long curly red hair," the Sioux couldn't have been much worried; for Custer had left it back in civilization; all of which has been well known for fifty years; is demonstrated by the photograph he had taken during his visit to New York during the Spring of '76, which was reproduced in the New York papers at the time; and was long since established not only by the statements of Mrs. Custer, but by those of every officer and man of the 7th Cavalry living after the battle. So the "long red hair" reason won't do.

NEXT, the "known bravery and courage" reason. Feather Earring, the same Minneconjou warrior heretofore quoted, is authority for the statement, which has been corroborated by other Sioux, that "no one knew Custer was present on the Little Big Horn River. It was believed his command was that of Crook, which we had fought on the Rosebud the week before, because it (the 7th Cavalry) came from the Rosebud. It was not for more than a month afterward, when some one brought news out from Standing Rock, that we knew Custer was killed."

It would seem to follow rather necessarily that if the Sioux didn't know that they were fighting Custer, they didn't refrain from scalping him because of "his known courage and bravery."

But—and this drives the last bit of halo from the mythical tale that Custer was the only one not scalped—the story is not true. It's a pretty picture, of course; "Noble red man respects dead hero's body while scalping and mutilating all others." Good headline stuff; and it's too bad to let the sunshine in and dispel the mirage, but it seems necessary. Lieut. James H. Bradley, 7th Infantry, was General Terry's Chief of Scouts. On the morning of June 27, 1876, he came upon the Custer field, being the first white man to discover it. Exactly one month after the battle, because of the shocking reports already going the rounds of the press anent mutilation of the soldier dead, he wrote a statement which was published in the Helena *Herald* of July 25, 1876. I will not quote it all; but yet enough to dispose forever of this oft repeated myth:

"Of the two hundred and six bodies buried on the field, there were very few that I did not see, and beyond scalping in possibly a majority of cases there was little mutilation. *Many of the bodies were not even scalped.* . . ."

NEXT, as to the number of Indians killed. Mr. Eagle says that number was 700; and that "they were all carried away and buried a day's journey from the Little Big Horn battleground," in a secret place.

This statement makes me wonder much whether Mr. Eagle heard aright. It certainly displays amazing disregard of the burial customs of his people. As a matter of fact, however, it is well known, and has been ever since the battle, that the bodies of some forty warriors were found in tepees in the Sioux camp, and that numerous others were found in trees and on scaffolds along the trail of the Indians during the reconnaisance made by Captain Ball of Gibbon's cavalry on the 28th. So it is clear that the Sioux didn't bury all their dead in a place of concealment. And while it is true that no reliable report of the Indian loss has ever been available, and it is very probable that others who died from wounds were sepultured in places never discovered, it has long been accepted as established that the Indian loss was small as compared with that of the cavalry. Mr. Eagle's figure of 700 makes it more than twice that of the troops; an obvious absurdity. Red Horse, one of the head council of Sitting Bull's camp, in a statement made to General Forsyth in 1877, gave the Indian losses as 136 killed and 160 wounded; and this estimate was remarked by General Sheridan at the time as being greatly in excess of any other made by the Sioux.

AS TO the rest of the letter—that part which deals with the story of Fowler and Winnett—I have no comment to make other than to say that if it is no more nearly correct than that which precedes it, it is only another of the same sort of fairy-tales that started with the old faker, Ridgley, who had the honor and distinction of being the first "witness" to break into print, which he did in the *Pioneer Press and Tribune* of Minneapolis, September 7, 1876, with a much better story than those of most of the members of the "witness club" who have followed him throughout the years. If the subject holds enough of interest, I advise aspiring witnesses of Custer's Last Fight to look up Ridgley's story. It will give them some pointers. He stood, so he said, on a hillside where he had a complete view of the battle, and so didn't miss anything that occurred; but strange to relate, he carelessly failed to mention the hundreds of other witnesses who, according to the stories they have told from time to time, must also have been present. Fowler, according to Mr. Eagle, is dead, so we can not interrogate him; so, until Mr. Winnett himself comes forward with a story that will hold water, I am constrained to remain "from Missouri."

Finally, Custer was not shot three times. His body had two wounds; one through the left breast and one through the left temple; and if we may credit the statement of Rain in the Face himself (who boasted of having killed Tom Custer), he not only did *not* kill the General, but had not the slightest idea who did. (*Outdoor Life*, March, 1903.)

I SUSPECT, Mr. Editor, that this letter might well be my own valedictory, following the example of the gentleman whose letter you print immediately after that of Mr. Eagle. To him, however, I wish to say that if he has any *facts* in his system, his best play is to remove his tongue from his cheek and talk straight. All he has done is to hint and insinuate and affect an air of mystery.

He asks how I know there was no witness (save the Indians) to Custer's passing. I don't. But I do know that every one who has put forward any such claim has in short order been demonstrated to be—shall I say "mistaken?" He asks why I didn't quote *all* of Reno's report, by innuendo implying that it contains something that I concealed. As a matter of fact, I quoted none of Reno's report. What I did was to give you his list of casualties in order to demonstrate that another of your correspondents had allowed imagination to work overtime when claiming that his brother was a medical officer killed with Custer. The list showed that there was no such medical officer killed with Custer; and that no such medical officer had ever been with

the 7th Cavalry, or in the Army was further shown by statements from the "Old Records" Division of the Adjutant General's office and the Cemeterial Division of the Quartermaster General's office. The point at issue was whether such an officer was killed with Custer, and having completely covered that point, there was no reason to quote Reno's report, or any other report.

HOWEVER, I am happy to tell him that his recollection of some of the statements in Reno's report is approximately correct. Reno did not say that trumpet calls were heard: that statement appeared in newspaper accounts of the fight. He did say, however, "I think we were fighting all the Sioux Nation, and also all the desperadoes, renegades, half-breeds and squaw-men between the Missouri and the Arkansas." But, so far as anybody has ever discovered, there was no foundation for his belief, and all the incidents which gave rise to it were long since accounted for. Trumpets were undoubtedly heard, several of them having been taken from Custer's dead; and there were certainly among the Sioux some who could both blow a trumpet and speak English. Red Horse, the Sioux head councilman before referred to, recounted to General Forsyth that, after they had killed all of Custer's men, there were found several bodies clad in citizens clothing which some of the young warriors proceeded to don; and so dressed, they went with the others to attack Reno on the hill. Some of them, too, dressed in uniforms and buckskin garments taken from the soldier dead: and one of these was mistaken by Lieut. De Rudio on the morning of the 26th for Tom Custer, a mistake that nearly cost him his life. It is small wonder that Reno and some of his men, seeing among their assailants men dressed in garments of civilization, and hearing blasts upon the trumpet, imagined that the Sioux had white allies. Kill Eagle, however, said that the trumpet calls were sounded by an Indian. (Bismarck *Dispatch*, pub. N. Y. *Herald*, September 24, '76.)

THE gentleman is mistaken about General Godfrey. It's a mere detail; but we may as well keep it straight. Godfrey was not with the packtrain at any time. On the contrary, he was in command of "K" Company, of Benteen's battalion. In the statement that "Custer was outgeneraled, outmaneuvered and outfought by better military strategists and tacticians than himself" the gentleman is certainly correct so far as that particular fight is concerned. And I have never heard any officer of the Army try to "save its face" by attempting to palliate, disguise or deny the fact. The results of the battle speak for themselves. The tactics of the Sioux were almost Napoleonic.

As Lieutenant Hare (who had been with the Ree scouts who ran away) said to his company commander as the latter arrived with Benteen upon the hill where the remnants of Reno's battalion were reforming: "We had a big fight in the valley and got whipped like ——!" Not even your correspondent could improve upon that eminently correct summary of the situation, applied to the entire battle.

And so you may say to the gentleman that I agree heartily with much that he says; that the Indians fought that day for hearth and home, and were amply justified in their stand. But I can't agree to his statement that he regrets that he was not himself present with Gall and Crazy Horse, helping to wipe out the 7th Cavalry. That statement I think he didn't mean, however much he may think he did. Blood is thicker than water, and the test would have found him on the side of civilization and against savagery, whatever the occasion.—W. A. GRAHAM, Lt. Col. Judge Advocate.

SOMETHING about the deadly "*jurupari*" tree from Gordon MacCreagh in connection with his complete novelette in this issue:

New York City.

Nobody seems to know an awful lot about it. Rumors and wild stories are plenty; but they are as believable as the customary yarns of the sixty-foot anacondas—which are quite as plentiful and perhaps more vehemently sworn to.

Only one meets up with people all the time who swear that they have seen the snakes personally. While with regard to the "devil tree" or "death tree," as the tales run, it is generally that So-and-So who was upriver four years ago had sworn to the yarn when he handed it to the narrator.

WELL, Fate took me up-river myself; and in the general discomfort of travel I had consigned the tree, along with the giant snakes and deadly bugs and such horrors, to the limbo of the subconscious superstitions. I was more urgently engaged with the question of tomorrow's grub and today's camp site.

After a period of many days—away upriver—came an ideal camp site. High trees, good foliage to keep off the dew, branches not too low (so crawly things wouldn't explore down the hammock ropes), trunks just the right distance for the hammocks, and—*no grass*.

"Splendid!" said I to my assistant, and *vice-versa*. "No bugs here."

But the Indians, the paddle-men, made vehement palaver to the effect of, "*Unga puranga. Jurupari na ochthiu*. Meaning, "Heap much no good. Devil-devil he live there."

So we white folks of superior education said, shucks and —— and told each other that these Indians had more queer ideas than you could shake a stick at. And we slung our hammocks right in the ideal bugless grove. But the Indians went and camped out on a sand-spit some fifty yards off.

IT SEEMS we didn't know it all. Pheugh! what a morning that was! I woke, thick and heavy and pepless, and wondered what I'd eaten that had gone wrong. My assistant woke and groaned about for a while, and presently went and vomited.

Whereat the Indians let off a grand ha-ha—they laughed at everything, those boys; even when one of themselves got hurt. "Ho-ho, didn't we tell you?" they grinned. "Jurupari lives there."

So we cursed them all we knew in the *geral* talk. But I brought away samples of the tree, leaves, bark and oily fruit, all duly ticketed and labeled.

Later—long, long time later—Dr. De Rivas of the Museo Commercial in Para experimented around with the stuff and told me that he placed it as one of the family Moraceae and that the individual tree would be Antiaris something or other, specifically not placed as far as he could tell. Analysis yielded a volatile oil which was a violent poison. The professor wished he might study the tree where it lived; but he couldn't spare the time for a five months' journey.—GORDON MACCREAGH.

FOR some time I've been getting letters accusing me, or some writer or reader speaking in our pages, of doing propaganda for the Nordic race. The charge, of course, is merely silly. When this magazine has propaganda to put forth it comes out in open advocacy of its cause.

I notice similar protests outside the sphere of our magazine. There have been quite a lot of them the past year or two, all complaining about pro-Nordic propaganda in one place or another. Now the curious thing is this:

With the exception of one man, who has not appeared in our magazine for several years, I know of no one who is doing any pro-Nordic propaganda, nor do I hear or read any pro-Nordic propaganda anywhere. All I can hear is the voice of the anti-Nordics. The conclusion is obvious—it is the anti-Nordics, not the pro-Nordics, who are doing propaganda work, accusing the other side merely as an excuse for handing out their own propaganda.

Is it all highly unimportant, or is there something of moment behind it? Most of us don't get wildly excited one way or the other on the question of Nordics *vs.* Mediterraneans, etc. If systematic propaganda is being done, it is probably not aimed at the Nordic question itself but through it at something else. Is all this only some more of the anti-English propaganda kept going in this country by French, Irish, Germans, the Soviet and others for their various reasons of self-gain?

OR IS it long-distance work? Is it, by any chance, akin to the subtle but very evident propaganda sent out the past year or two by the two big political parties on the danger of any third party, on the need of voting for the party man even if you know he isn't the best man, on the danger of any infringement on the sacred rights of property even if human rights must suffer, on the well known fact that this is a republican, not a democratic, form of government and that the voters are too ignorant to exercise control over their own government and should more and more delegate power to their representatives—in spite of such political debaucheries as the oil and other scandals the politicians trust us to forget?

At first glance there seems no connection. But consider that, with the exception of the steam-roller rights of property which are worshipped by Nordic and Mediterranean alike, the bulwark against these evils the two political parties and whatever is behind them are trying to put over on us by propaganda is very distinctly a Nordic bulwark—to wit, the Nordic tradition of government by the people themselves.

This country was settled, given its direction and started on its way chiefly by (1) French, Spanish, (2) Scotch, Irish, (3) English and Dutch, but the political and social impress from the first group was light unless you count the Spanish influence in the southwest at a later date. It was the third group that gave us our legacy of government by the people, a Nordic group. The second group were Gaelic, but they worked under the Nordic tradition imposed upon them by the English.

In other words, propaganda against Nordics in general or English in particular can be made very effective propaganda against the idea of letting the people have any real control over their own government.

SOUNDS far fetched? Well, consider carefully. Suppose you were striving earnestly to take still more power out of the hands of the people and give it to the few. To do this you would have to break down or greatly weaken our tradition of popular government. Would you dream of omitting just the kinds of propaganda that are enumerated above? If you did omit them, you'd be a fool.

No, I have no proof. Who would have or could have proof except those of the inner circle doing the propaganda? Perhaps there's nothing in it. Perhaps the whole destiny of our country is tied up in it. I do not know. But *neither do you.*

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you read and observe the simple rules, thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue.*)

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: Vol. 1, No. 1, to Jan. 1917, with covers intact. What have you?—Address W. S. CHAPMAN, 24 Union Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

WILL BUY: All issues before 1916. Have for sale 1920, 1921, 1923 and 1924, complete. What offers?—Address HENRY WILLVARD, Marion, Illinois, Route 5.

WILL BUY: November 1910, May 1911, February 1912, March 1913 and April 1915 at your own price.—Address F. C. CONNERS, 1300-1600 North Branch Street, Chicago, Ill.

WILL SELL: A few 1921, all 1922, 1923 and 1924 to date. What am I offered for all or part?—Address EDWARD B. MALLON, R. F. D. No. 5, Box No. 176. Norfolk, Virginia.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscripts. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12. Philippine Islands
13. Hawaiian Islands and China
14. Japan
15—18. Asia. In Four Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27. Turkey
28. Asia Minor
29—31. Balkans. In Three Parts
32. Scandinavia
33. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
34. Great Britain
35—37. South America. In Three Parts
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39—41. Mexico. In Three Parts
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American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
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Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
Herpetology
Entomology
Standing Information

Touring the Southwest

A WINTER itinerary for the Californian:

Question:—"We are planning a touring trip in a Ford car through northern Arizona, New Mexico and central Texas, *via* Yuma, Phœnix, Williams, Holbrook, Springerville, Albuquerque, Santa Fé, Amarillo, Wichita Falls and Fort Worth. The trip will be made during January and February.

What weather conditions is one likely to find at that season? What is the nature of the roads between those places, and what condition are they likely to be in, in those months?

I dread the possibility of gumbo mud; but we need hardly expect to encounter it on the trip, do we? Would you recommend the more southerly route in preference?"—R. S., El Centro, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Robinson:—Over most of the route selected the conditions may not be at all bad, although, of course, you will have cold weather. By this I mean the Arizona and New Mexico part of the trip. I am not sufficiently familiar with the Texas end to give you any advice.

However, I would advise your taking the southern route to cut out that part of the road between Phœnix or Prescott and Albuquerque. Not all of this would be bad, but you would pass through a part of northern Arizona where the weather and road conditions may be bad. I refer to that part from Ash Fork to beyond Holbrook, and again over the Datil Mountains between Springerville and Magdalena.

Around Flagstaff and Williams you would probably encounter snow. The Weather Bureau says that at Flagstaff there is an average snowfall in January of 17.7 inches and in February of 20.1 inches. I have been snow-bound there myself as late as Easter Sunday for three days with over two feet of snow. Williams averages for January 17 inches and for February 16.5 inches. By the time you get to Holbrook it drops to about three inches. At Flagstaff during January there are likely to be seven days and February eight days when it rains or snows.

So why not try the southern route? The best southern route is said to be *via* Indio, Mecca, Blythe, Salome, Buckeye, Phœnix. You would probably go *via* Yuma to Phœnix and know more about that road than I do.

From Phœnix, instead of going north go to Tucson and to follow the best road, to Benson, Douglas, Lordsburg. There is a shorter road between Tucson and Lordsburg, but it is not as good. All of the lower road is said to be a finely surfaced road. From Phœnix, if you want to see the Roosevelt Dam you could go that way, and *via* Globe to Benson.

From Lordsburg to Deming, to Hot Springs where you could stop for the baths, and a side trip of three miles to the Elephant Butte Dam, which is about the same size as the Roosevelt Dam. Then to Socorro, Albuquerque and on east as you planned.

Most of these roads as far as Albuquerque are good most of the year, and you should make a very good trip and not strike much cold weather. From here on it would probably be worse.

Through southern Arizona and into New Mexico as far as Albuquerque there would be an average of two or three days in each of the months mentioned when it would storm, according to the Weather Bureau.

Think you can make the trip as far as outlined without trouble if the Winter is an average one. For farther west through Texas I would suggest that you inquire further.

If you still think you would want to go through the north part of Arizona I would suggest that a week or so before you start you write to the Chambers of Commerce at Williams, Flagstaff and Holbrook and ask the condition of the roads and the weather.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Japanese Sword

THE weapon with a soul:

Request:—"The enclosed rough sketch is that of a Japanese sword which I was fortunate enough to procure at a time when the estate of one of our deceased admirals of the U. S. Navy was being offered to the high bidder. I have an idea that it was given to him as a gift of appreciation for some reason or other as it is in itself a beautiful piece and to my mind a work of art.

I would greatly appreciate it, should you be able to give me an idea of its origin, approximate age and type, also its value from a collector's point of view.

The case A is of a very light-weight wood, evidently of two pieces invisibly glued. It is lacquered in red with the exception of two bands inlaid at the top in black. The shrimp design is raised in bronze and is beautifully executed in fine detail.

The small dagger B slides into the case through a groove in the side passing through the guard. The haft is of lacquered copper with a silver inlaid half disk at the lower end. There is also the figure of a bird—a swan or stork—flying. The bird is in raised design of bronze with silver-tipped wings. The inscription on the blade I hope is decipherable.

The hand guard C is a work of art in itself. It is of heavy bronze, the design that of a dragon I think. Have tried to duplicate it as faithfully as possible on paper so as to give you an idea of the design.

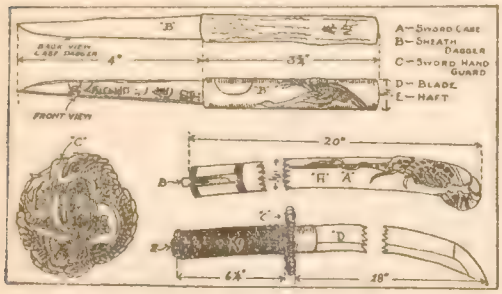
The blade D is of very highly polished steel as keen as a razor edge. It is clamped into the haft by a piece of white metal which might be silver.

The haft E is most interesting, for under the lacings of finely woven silken cord are two golden dragons in miniature, one on each side. The basic construction seems to be of a cement or stone. It has the appearance of small grains of quartz about a sixteenth of an inch in size, each grain having a high polish. On the top is a bronze cap surmounted with a golden shrimp with another riveted to a ring of bronze at the base.

I am also in possession of two other swords, very finely carved either on bone or ivory with figures depicting men and women performing various tasks, each subject differing. The male figures look as if

they may be priests. One sword—the larger—is about twenty-eight inches in length with a blade of nineteen inches, the smaller one about fifteen inches with a blade of ten inches. The designs on both are similar and evidently relate as a set.

Any information you can give me regarding the above, I can assure you will be greatly appreciated."—HARRY R. MANN, Washington, D. C.



Reply, by Mrs. Knudson:—Perhaps I shall be unable to tell you anything very definite about your Japanese sword, for the reason that one must "touch, taste and handle" everything of that sort in order to tell whether they are genuine originals or just copies of something supposed to be better and more valuable.

Before I enter into any full description of this sword business, will you kindly answer some questions for me?

1. About what time might this have come into the deceased admiral's possession? And did he do any particular service in Japan?

2. Please examine carefully the "shrimp"—which I surmise may be a cray-fish—to see if you can find a signature upon it anywhere; please do the same with the sword-guard, looking upon the under side of it; also the bronze cap and ring upon the haft. All these may have signatures which you may not have noticed. If such are there, please draw them for me. Upon the back of the case you have drawn a signature. Will you do that once more and with great care to get it as exact as possible?

3. May not the covering of the haft, under the gold dragons, be shark skin polished? May not the "white metal" with which the haft clamps the blade, be white bronze—is it a yellowish white or bluish white?

4. Look closely at the blade of the sword. Is there any difference in shade of color between the edge and back? If any such difference, what width of edge does this give? What is the curve from the straight of the blade? That is to say, drawing a straight line from haft to point of blade, centering this line, how much out of the straight lies the point?

If I may have this added information, I may be able to tell you enough so that you will be able to draw some conclusion as to what you have. The other two blades sound as interesting as the one you have drawn so well. They sound to me like the long sword and the *harakiri* dirk carried by the *daimios* before the Restoration—a set, as you say.

LATER Mrs. Knudson supplemented this reply as follows:

Sometime ago I answered your letter asking some information, without which I could give no definite advice regarding the Japanese sword in your possession. As no reply came from you, I thought you might be away; but even yet I have no word from you, so fear my letter of inquiry must have gone astray. In order not to keep you waiting longer and because the subject may be of general interest to "Ask Adventure" readers, I am now attempting to give a very general answer to your communication, trusting that this explanation may account for the seeming long delay.

The sword is closely connected with Japan's history, and volumes might be written, after exhaustive research, with it as a subject. The legends of the country declare the sword-blade to be possessed of a soul, which by tradition was in feudal days corrupted or converted into the general thought of the sword as "the soul of the *samurai*."

Connected history of armor and of the sword goes back to Yoritomo (1192-99 A.D.), founder of the hereditary Shogunate and dual system of Government, which put the real governing power in the hands of the Shogun, or War Lord, and conveniently placed the Mikado in the background as too sacred a personality to be disturbed by mundane affairs. The wearing of the sword was a privilege of the *daimios*, or nobles, and the *samurai*, the officer or gentry warrior class—retainers of the *daimios*.

In the sixteenth century the wearing of two swords became obligatory—one, the *katana*, eighteen inches long, slightly curved toward the point, was the arm used in fighting. The other, the *wakizashi*, or dirk, about nine inches long, was the blade used for *harakiri*, or legal suicide in preservation of honor. In 1876 an imperial edict abolished the wearing of swords as a mark of the gentleman, and at that time many blades went into the curio shops for sale.

IT OCCURRED to me that if this sword came into the deceased admiral's possession at about that time, it may be an original old one. Or it may have been fashioned especially for him, in appreciation of some service. Or it may have been picked up in some curio shop—and may be of modern manufacture. It is very hard to tell unless examination gives earmarks of its age and workmanship.

Much art of the metal worker was expended upon the old swords, and those of value were done by known craftsmen who "signatured" their handiwork. The cray-fish was a favorite design of one artist. If done by that artist it would have his signature somewhere; if done by a modern worker in imitation it might have no such signature.

The guard and cap and ring would all have signatures, if genuinely old and valuable. But these might have been done by different workmen. The ornamentations of the old sword were the valuable "jewelry" of its possessor; it is possible that each part may have been done by a specialist, or the whole ornamentation might have been fashioned by one man. The signature you have drawn upon the back of the case may possibly be that of Haruakira one of the feudal metal workers of note; but as you have drawn it there are variations from his usual signature.

Polished shark skin was the usual covering of the haft of fine blades, and white bronze was frequently used in the clamps.

The Japanese old blades themselves, authorities state, are unrivaled even by Damascus or Toledo

blades. The manner of their forging left a scarcely discernible line of color between the blade and the back. This line would not be present, probably, in a modern blade. The curve of the old blades was a slight one, I understand.

You will see from these very general points that I am wholly unable to give you anything at all definite regarding age or value of your sword. If I can add anything to this, however, for your further satisfaction, come again.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

The Ten Thousand Islands

ONE of our last frontiers:

Request:—"I would like some information concerning the southwestern Coast of Florida, especially the Ten Thousand Island District. Fishing, hunting, land, etc., are subjects of interest also.

Please do not publish my name."— —— ——

Reply, by Mr. Liebe:—The southwestern coast of Florida is a wild, wild country, thinly settled, a last frontier; I have seen no correct map of it even. There are more than 10,000 of those islands, incidentally! They are composed usually of mud and mangrove on coral reefs, and most of them are unfit for cultivation. Even inland from there, on the broad rim between the coast and the "Glades," there is coral rock just under the surface at most places.

I don't think I would care to try to farm there, though trees seem to grow unhindered in the porous rock. The fishing is fine—the finest I know anywhere. Hunting is usually good for duck, deer, turkey, fox-squirrel, snipe, with some bear, panther and bobcat; I killed five rattlers on a one-week hunt down there three years ago.

Don't know who owns the land, but probably much of it could be homesteaded. Write the General Land Office, at Washington, D. C., and also the Florida Land Office, at Gainesville, Fla., for further information concerning homesteading.

I know a man living on Wood Key, in the Ten Thousand Islands, who can give you late information concerning his section—if he but will. His name is Eugene Hamilton, and he gets his mail at Chokoloskee, Lee County, Fla. Mention my name if you write him.

Tramping in South America

A ROUGH trail to follow:

Request:—"Having been informed through *Adventure* magazine of your address and the fact that you are well posted on South America, especially the territory covering the States of Venezuela, Guianas and Brazil, I am taking this liberty to ask if you would be so kind as to give me any information that might be of assistance to one who contemplates traveling through that part of the country as a prospector and hunter; that is, expecting to perform the journey on foot and depending partly upon the game and fishing that may abound there. I would especially desire to know the climatic conditions during different seasons of the year; the kind of game and fish, and whether abundant, that may be found; the kind of minerals; customs and habits of the people; and whether they speak different dialects or pure Spanish.

As I am contemplating undertaking an expeditionary trip through that part of the country about July or August of next year, I would very much appreciate any information that you may be so kind to give me, for I have been planning this journey for some time and intend to carry it through. I am under the impression that it would be possible to perform the trip on foot with an ordinary camping outfit, together with a good rifle (Savage make, 250-300 caliber) and several burros to carry the pack.

I am enclosing a self-addressed envelop, with postage, and I sincerely trust that you may find time to write and oblige me with whatever information you could give me on the subject."—ANDREW E. ZANETTI, Mare Island, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Barbour:—As your questions are not specific, I can only reply in a general way.

The trip you contemplate is a very hard one. It could be done, in fact has, but entails great hardships and a certain amount of danger, not so much from savages and wild animals as from noxious insects, tropical fevers, etc.

During some of the trip burros could be used, but over a larger part some kind of boat would be necessary, and in some places packers only could get your equipment through the trackless jungle.

Generally speaking you could live on the country, if your stomach can adapt itself to a nearly straight diet of meat and fish.

Climatic conditions are the worst during the summer months, as that is the rainy season. If I were doing it I would start in the late fall and make the trip through the drier and cooler winter months.

As you work south, up river, from the coast of Venezuela or the Guianas, you could travel a long distance by boat. When you reached the mountains you would have to travel overland, until the southward flowing streams in Brazil became navigable for a canoe or dugout.

In the Guianas and Venezuela are gold and some diamonds. There are probably minerals on the south slopes of the mountains which form the northern boundary of Brazil, but so far as I know the region has never been prospected.

Spanish could carry you through to Brazil, for even the Indians have a smattering of it, but after you got to Brazil you would need to use Portuguese. Most of the Indians are nomadic.

It you used the kind of rifle you mention, you could not buy ammunition locally. Only the old 44-40 is generally used, and is powerful enough for all game at the short ranges which prevail.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Commercial Aviation in the United States

THE next phase of the transportation industry that awaits the advent of "big business:"

Request:—"Will you please tell me as much as you possibly can about commercial aviation in the south? Could it be made a profitable business?

Give the names of some of the Eastern companies that are doing this kind of business."—RALPH P. EAGERTON, Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Reply, by Lieut.-Col. Schauffler:—Some phases of commercial aviation are fairly profitable at present, although the operation of airplanes on schedule to date has not proved very successful, with possibly the exception of the Aeromarine Airways, Inc., and the United States Air Mail. The Aeromarine operations have been successful inasmuch as they have kept up a pretty fair schedule and have had practically no accidents of a serious nature; but nobody outside the directors of the company can really say what their financial performance has been. They have been backed by a man with millions of dollars at the tips of his fingers.

The performance of the United States Air Mail over the past three years shows, without a doubt, that the operation of planes on schedule is very practical; and when one considers that the same motor used by the Air Mail planes could carry just as quickly and efficiently another 1,250 pounds each trip, and when one remembers that a modern plane could be built and sold to operating companies by the airplane manufacturers at a reasonable price instead of the prices they are now obtaining from the Government, why then it seems without question that the possibilities of commercial aviation are certainly to be thought of seriously in the very near future.

Here are a few opinions of men whose names are well known in this country. These quotations are taken from speeches or signed articles.

". . . we are on the threshold of a new era in transportation—aircraft."—Charles M. Schwab, February, 1923.

". . . high time . . . business men . . . awakened to the advantages of air navigation. . . ."—John Raskob, February, 1923.

". . . America best adapted of all countries for commercial aviation."—Howard E. Coffin of Hudson Motors, February, 1923.

"The point of interest to me is the influence airplane travel is going to have upon business and social development."—Samuel E. Felton, January, 1923.

I COULD go on and give you quotations from a lot of other big men; but they all hit practically the same nail on the head, so what's the use? ommercial aviation in the United States is bound to come, but we have *got* to have Federal laws which will make it impossible for any Tom, Dick or Harry to operate a plane that is almost a pile of junk. At present there are *no* laws to prevent a man who knows nothing of flying from buying an old piece of junk and going out to a country fair, or some other such place where there are people ready to ride, and attempting to carry passengers for money. Of course this does not actually happen, for a man would hardly try such a thing; but it has happened in the case of men who have been taught just enough about flying to make them think they are expert pilots.

It takes a great many hours of experience in the air, under all kinds of conditions, to make a commercial pilot or one that is fit to carry passengers. The average civilian flying school gives a student about four or five hundred minutes in the air, turns him loose for a "solo" flight and if he manages to stagger around for a few figure eights and a few landings they present him with a pilot's certificate or license issued by the National Aeronautic Association. This certificate or license does not mean that the owner is fit to fly passengers. It is just a piece of paper that shows a man has flown a few times alone and has been lucky enough to get away with it.

If the United States were a member of the League of Nations we would have all matters pertaining to flying governed by international laws. Pilots would not be able to fly without strict physical examinations every so often; they would not be allowed to carry passengers until they had been examined and passed by a board to determine whether they were capable and able to carry out the various regulations.

In Europe no plane is allowed to fly without a license, showing that it has been inspected and found "airworthy." Just imagine what a mess we would be in if there were no laws making it a punishable offense to drive an automobile without a license, or allowing a steamer or a railway train to be operated by men who did not know their business!

When this country wakes up and makes laws for the regulation of airways and matters pertaining to aviation, then we shall be ready to make a real success of commercial aviation.

THE possibilities here in the United States are boundless. With proper regulations in effect commercial air traffic—express and passenger—which is now practically non-existent, but does exist in Europe, should be made a paying proposition, for we are blessed with the necessary attributes to a greater degree than they are in Europe. Here are a few figures which have been prepared which will show why aeronautics should pay.

A. Estimated private capital in the United States available in the next seven years for aeronautical purposes, $10,000,000,000. Estimated European capital, exclusive of Russia, $1,000,000,000.

B. Recorded landing fields in the United States to present date, over three thousand. Recorded landing fields in Europe, a little over three hundred.

C. Comparative adaptability of the United States public to new forms of automotive transportation as shown by motor vehicles in use in the United States compared to other countries: United States, ten and one-half millions; other countries, one million.

D. Because the transport airplane is even in its present state of development as cheap to operate as a motor truck. Airplane cost per mile (modern commercial plane) load six passengers or one thousand five hundred pounds, $0.50. Truck load per mile (two tons) $0.50.

E. Because airplanes operating on schedule over regular airways are reliable and safe. See following comparison of schedules completed on time. United States Air Mail (two years) 95.5%; *Junker's Traffic Company (in Europe) 96.0%; Pennsylvania Railroad System, 93.0%.

F. Because the airplane is the fastest known means of transportation. Airplane (average cruising speed fully loaded) 90 miles per hour. Truck, 10 miles per hour. Railroad (freight and passenger average) 35 miles per hour.

G. Because it takes little or no capital to start

*This comparison is unfair to the United States Air Mail because the latter flew over three times as many miles under a greater variety of weather conditions.

an airplane line, other than the cost of operating and cost of equipment, for all other items can be taken care of by local authorities if municipal landing fields are put into operation over the country just as garages are now operated; and there are no large expenditures for tunnels, bridges and grades as there are on railway rights of way.

The above figures have been supplied to me by a company that is getting ready to operate in this country when the right time comes, and by that I mean when the necessary laws are passed. I would suggest your getting in touch with the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce, Fifth Avenue, New York City, for further information. Their Year Book is a mine of information. This book also gives the names of all commercial operating companies in the South, such as they are.

I would suggest that if you are contemplating going into the aeronautical transportation business you "look before you invest." Let me know if there is anything more I can do for you.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Land in the Philippines

THE "Friar Lands" referred to by Mr. Connor were formerly the property of religious societies:

Request:—"I spent about six months in the Philippines during the war when I was in the Navy, although this afforded me very little opportunity to see much of the islands, only from the ship. We spent about two months cruising among the islands, and to me these green emeralds of the Pacific looked like a Paradise on earth.

Since my return to the United States I can not rid myself of that desire to return to the Philippines to live. I am a single man, have seen all of this world that I care to see, especially the United States, am of a retiring disposition, have a few dollars saved up and my own ambition is to buy me a ranch or farm in the Philippines, where a pair of overalls is good enough for Sunday.

To begin with, I don't want to attempt to raise hemp, bananas or pineapples to go broke on; I want to farm like the Arkansans, enough to live on and no more. About what is the price of improved and unimproved land? Can an American citizen own land down there? Are the titles good?

An answer to these questions, together with any other information, would be very welcome to me.

Thank you in advance for any favors you may extend to me."—M. G. Law, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Connor:—I agree with you about the Islands—they sure are wonderful when one first glimpses them from the deck of a steamer, or through a port-hole. But before you finally cast the die to return there, think well of the following:

Let me slip you some valuable dope regarding the Public Lands—for purchase and homesteading. In accordance with Act No. 2874 of the Philippine Legislature, approved November 29th, 1919, you may, if you have served ninety days in Army, Navy or Marine Corps of the United States, homestead fifty acres of land of the Public Domain. Upon the filing of an application, and the approval thereof by the Director of Lands, possession may be taken of said land applied for upon payment of $5.00 as entry fee. The period granted by law for improvement by homesteaders is from two to five years from and after date of approval of application. When patent is granted an additional fee of $5.00 is paid which makes the homestead fee $10.00. Small as this amount is, the law gives the homesteader the option to pay for it in annual instalments.

ONE may purchase Public Lands of agricultural quality up to and not to exceed two hundred and forty-seven acres in the case of an individual, and 2,530 acres to a corporation or association. The lands are sold after an appraisal by Government officials. This varies in each case.

One may lease 2,530 acres for a period of twenty-five years, and then re-lease it for another period not to exceed twenty-five years.

"The Friar Lands"—One may purchase from the Insular Government Friar Lands not to exceed thirty-nine acres. A corporation duly registered in the Islands may purchase 2,530 acres. The value of this land is also fixed by the Government, and is sold by auction.

You may raise truck gardening just the same as you would raise it in Southern California, and in some places domestic crops, such as we enjoy here in the U. S., are raised. There are testing stations for soil, live stock, etc., conducted by the Government. You should have considerable capital to homestead anywhere. I know because I've made a bet of $16.00 with Uncle Sam that I will stick longer in this desert than he requires me. I think I am going to win—in other words I am a homesteader myself, and know very, very well how the dollars slip through your fingers when you build improvements, dig wells, irrigate and put on a house of the approved type. Believe me, *I do*

Trust that I have answered you satisfactorily. Thank you!

Make Your Questions Specific

THIS is the kind of question our experts simply can't answer:

Request:—"I would like to have you furnish me with any information you can about geography, stock-raising, mining, hunting, camping, and outdoor life in general in your territory."— ——

P. S.—I would like to know ranching life.

Reply, by Mr. Middleton:—Your letter of inquiry is at hand and, "gosh", man, you've sure given me a large order. Should I attempt to tell you all there is to be told, as to geography, stock-raising, mining, hunting, camping and outdoor life in general, in the territory (Colorado and Wyoming), that I cover for *Adventure*, I am afraid I would still be telling at it at this time next week.

Now if you will only make your query a little more specific—tell me just what part of Colorado or Wyoming you are interested in and just what it is that you would like to inquire about, I will gladly make an attempt to give you a reliable answer, but honestly, your inquiry which I have at hand is not very definite.

I am enclosing two leaflets which deal with ranching, also with hunting and fishing and the pack-animal.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

THE following lumberjack song was contributed to the department by Mr. R. A. Cross, who says:

> I enclose a Maine lumber camp chantey on the death of Guy Reed. I have sent you my original copy, spelling and all.
>
> I might say that *landen* (landing) is a pile of logs on the bank of a river ready to be rolled in when the ice breaks up. *Face* would be the sheer side of this landing facing the river.

I have revised the spelling except for one case where the original seemed to indicate a local pronunciation—Anderscogan instead of Androscoggin. A slightly longer version of this same story was printed by Roland P. Gray in his "Songs and Ballads of the Maine Lumberjacks," pages 24-28. I should be greatly obliged to any reader who could tell me how old the song is, or give any information concerning the incident on which it is founded.

Guy Reed

(*Text contributed by Mr. R. A. Cross*)

How well do I remember one dark and stormy night:
The rain it fell in torrents, the lightning flashed so bright;
The moon and stars above me did not their light reveal,
For dark clouds so gloomy did their welcome lights conceal.

The post brought me a letter I hastened to peruse,
Was written by a friend of mine but bore me startling news,
For once I knew a fine young man as you would wish to see,
And in an instant he was hurled into Eternity.

He and his companions, where the waters they do roar,
Was rolling in a landing on the Anderscogan shore;
They picked a face on one of them from bottom to the top—
Full thirty feet this landing, a perpendicular drop.

To work a face much longer would be a foolish part,
A jar so slight, you see, it might this lofty landing start.
There was a few among them did volunteer to go
To roll a log from off the top to start the logs below.

This young man he among them with heart so stout and brave,
Not thinking he at night would be all straightened for the grave,
Not thinking that death's cruel hand so soon could lay him low,
To leave the ones he loved so well in sorrow, grief, and woe.

Those logs they roll quickly, the landing cracks below,
And onward sped unto the verge, but would no further go.
This young man now approaches the verge of landing high,
While all the crew with paled cheeks and quivering lips stood by.

Up went a shout of voices to warn him of his fate,
And just an instant he did pause, he seemed to hesitate;
He rolled the log just half way ere the landing broke like glass,
And quick as thought he disappeared amid the rolling mass.

Those logs they rolled quickly from off his mangled form;
The birds was singing sweetly, the sun shone bright and warm
Strong men knelt down beside him, could not their grief command;
Unbidden tears burst from their eyes and fell into the sand.

Tenderly they bore him, and laid him on the green
Beneath a shady tree that grows near by a pearling stream;
The bubbling, sparkling waters stealing o'er their beds of sand
Seem to whisper, murmur softly, a farewell to the dead.

His poor feeble father is stricken now with grief;
The joy of earthly pleasure will grant him no relief,
For untold gold and silver, position, wealth in store,
Sunny skies, or music sweet will not the dead restore.

His mother she died early when he was but a child,
They laid her down to sleep near a forest fair and wide;
His sisters and his brothers are sleeping by her side
In a quiet country churchyard near the river's dancing tide.

The robin and the swallow, the sunshine and the rain,
The cuckoo and the sparrow with the spring will come again;

The blackbird and the thrush from forn (foreign?) lands will soar,
But loved ones that in death do sleep will come again no more.

Kind friends and loving kindred of him that is dead and gone
To a better land in Heaven far away beyond the sun,
The one you loved so dearly you will never again see more
Till you cross through death's dark valley to that bright celestial shore.

DOES any one know more of this bit which comes from J. T., Jr.? He picked it up in West Virginia about 1903.

The Old Gray Mare

Once I had an old gray mare,
Once I had an old gray mare,
Once I had an old gray mare,
And I hitched her to the plow.

Chorus: Ringdum, dingdum, diddle a day,
Ringdum, dingdum, diddle a day,
Ringdum, dingdum, diddle a day,
Ringdum, dingdum, diddle a day!

Then I began to beat and squall (*thrice.*)
But the derned old mare wouldn't work at all.

Then I got down on my knees to pray, (*thrice.*)
And the derned old mare she run away.

Then I started out on her track, (*thrice.*)
Found her in a mud hole, flat of her back.

Then I thought it was no sin, (*thrice.*)
I out with my knife and I began to skin.

Then I looked up towards the sky, (*thrice.*)
And saw the buzzards flying by.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial,** the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE TANGLED WARP — ***Warren Elliot Carleton***
Benny had been caught in the coils.

THE NAMELESS HUNTER — ***F. St. Mars***
The puma makes a mighty leap.

THE BUSH LOPERS Conclusion — ***Hugh Pendexter***
Traitors fare badly at the hands of *Carcajou.*

THE BROKEN DERRINGER — ***Ernest Lyons***
"You are a coward to shoot a man in cold blood!"

THE BULLY OF THE *BEHEMOTH* — ***Arthur M. Harris***
"Science" is a mighty thing—sometimes.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Arthur O. Friel, Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, Leslie MacFarlane, Hobart C. Montee, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Farnham Bishop, Leonard H. Nason, Thomson Burtis and Charles Beadle; and short stories by Larry Barretto, Captain Mansfield, Lewis H. Kilpatrick, George E. Holt, John Webb, William Byron Mowery, L. Paul, S. B. H. Hurst, Alanson Skinner, Royce Brier and others; stories of fur traders in the Snow Country, knights-at-arms in medieval France, stowaways on China Sea, doughboys on the Western Front, viking-farers in Norway, pirates in Madagascar, aviators in the oilfields, mounted policemen in South Africa, Indians on the Plains, magicians in Morocco.

Successful Breadwinners

Know the Value of Internal Cleanliness

IF you spend your day indoors, you are facing the problem of every indoor worker—insufficient exercise. Leading medical authorities agree that unless you maintain internal cleanliness, your health will eventually break down. Your mind will lose its keenness. Your ambition will be dulled. Others will win the rewards you strive for.

Internal cleanliness means complete freedom from constipation. It is responsible for your physical well-being. Moreover, says a noted specialist, if you lack internal cleanliness you are working under a severe handicap. Internal cleanliness is the secret of a clear eye and an active brain. With it work becomes a pleasure; without it, a drudgery.

Your doctor will tell you laxatives and cathartics only aggravate constipation and often lead to permanent injury.

Physicians Advise Lubrication

Medical science has found in *lubrication* the best means of maintaining internal cleanliness. Nujol lubricates and softens the food waste. It enables Nature to secure regular, thorough elimination. Thus, it both prevents and overcomes constipation.

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Take Nujol as regularly as you wash your face or brush your teeth. Nujol is not a medicine. Like pure water it is harmless. Nujol makes internal cleanliness a habit—the healthiest habit in the world. For sale by all druggists. Made by Nujol Laboratories, Standard Oil Co. (New Jersey).

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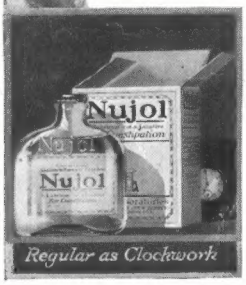

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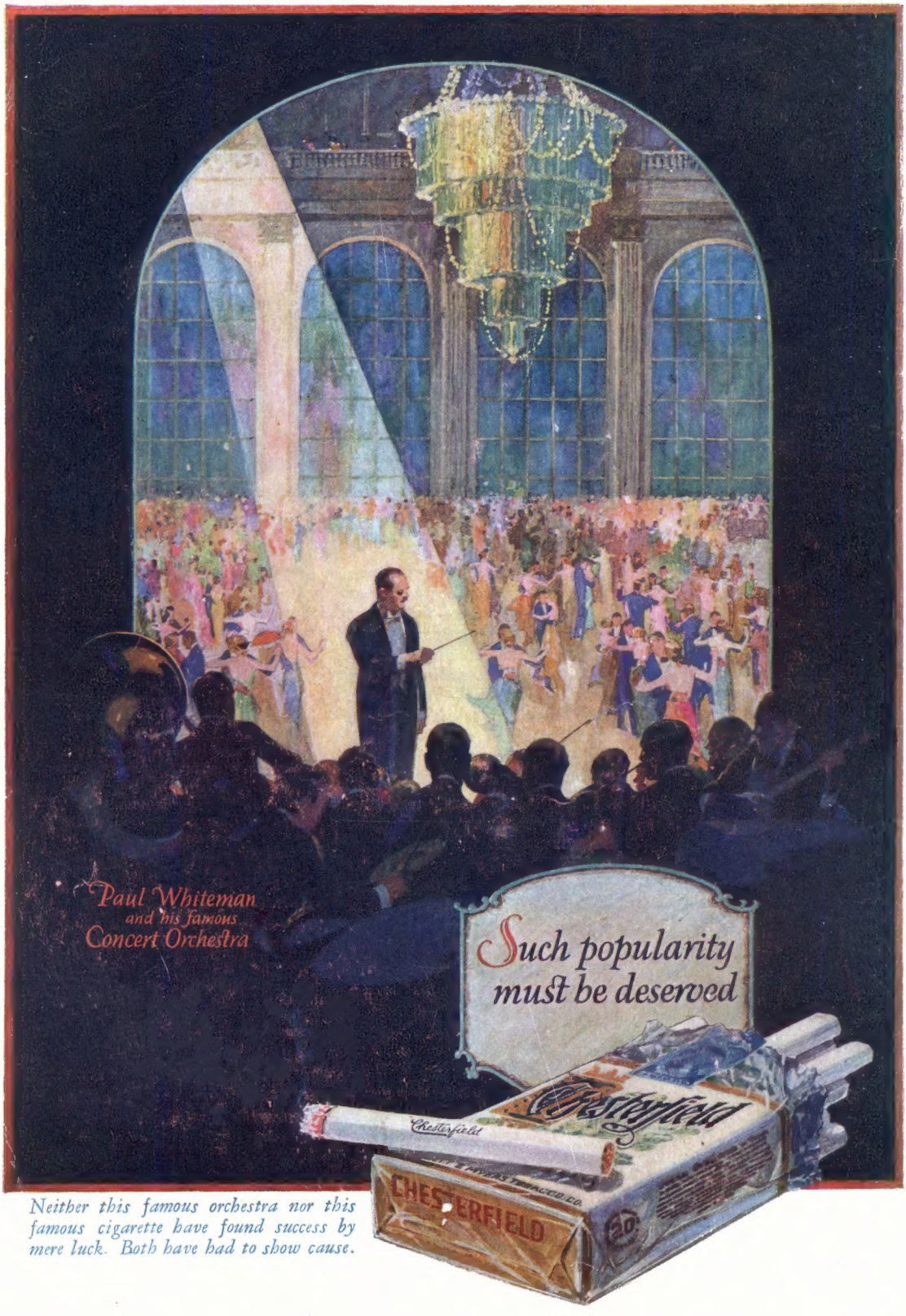

Neither this famous orchestra nor this famous cigarette have found success by mere luck. Both have had to show cause.